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MONGOLS

FROM COUNTRY TO CITY

Floating Boundaries, Pastoralism and City Life in the Mongol Lands

Edited by Ole Bruun and Li Narangoa

北京大學圖書館藏[illegible]

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Preface

Ole Bruun and Li Narangoa

In this volume we tried to present the movement of Mongol people between country and city, and between periphery and centre, while at the same time examining the shift of Mongol identity between past and present, and between pastoralism and sedentary culture in Mongol lands during the last two centuries (the 20th century in particular).

What then are the Mongol lands? If we talk about Mongols and Mongolia today, many people would think that Mongols are those people found in the independent state of Mongolia, which is a landlocked territory wedged between China and Russia. However, there are many Mongols living outside this state of Mongolia that you may not find on a political map. There are more than 5 million Mongols living in China and in the Republics of Buryatia and Kalmykia in the Russian Federation. Their numbers indeed are altogether more than double the population of the state of Mongolia.

Therefore, in order to talk about the rest of the Mongols, what we mean with the term 'Mongol lands' is a territory broader than the territory of the state of Mongolia. Our main focus in the project is, however, the state of Mongolia and the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region in China because not only ate there concentrated most Mongols in these two regions but also they have a common border and reflect each other's political and social changes. Their relation to each other provides much more interesting aspects to look at in terms of the changes in Mongol socio-political and cultural identity.

We would like to thank NIAS in Copenhagen for supporting us throughout this project and especially for providing Li Narangoa with a one-month scholarship that enabled us to get together and to write the first draft of the introduction. We would also like to thank the Asia Committee of the European Science Foundation for providing generous financial assistance for initiating this project.

The last but not least, we would like to thank the contributors to the volume for their patience and cooperation.

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Perspective, A. Henare, M. Holbraad & S. Wastell (eds) (London: University College London Press).

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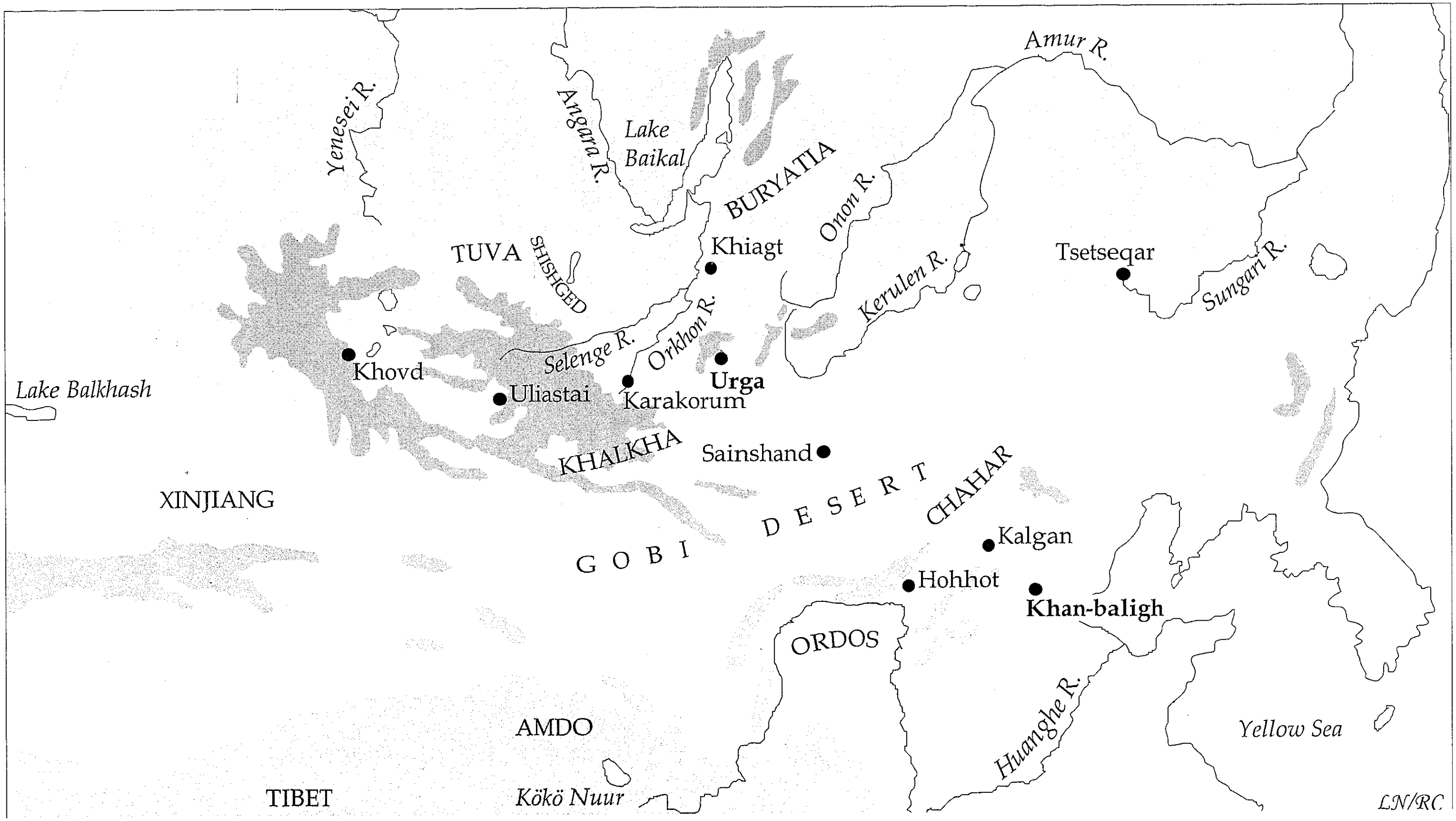
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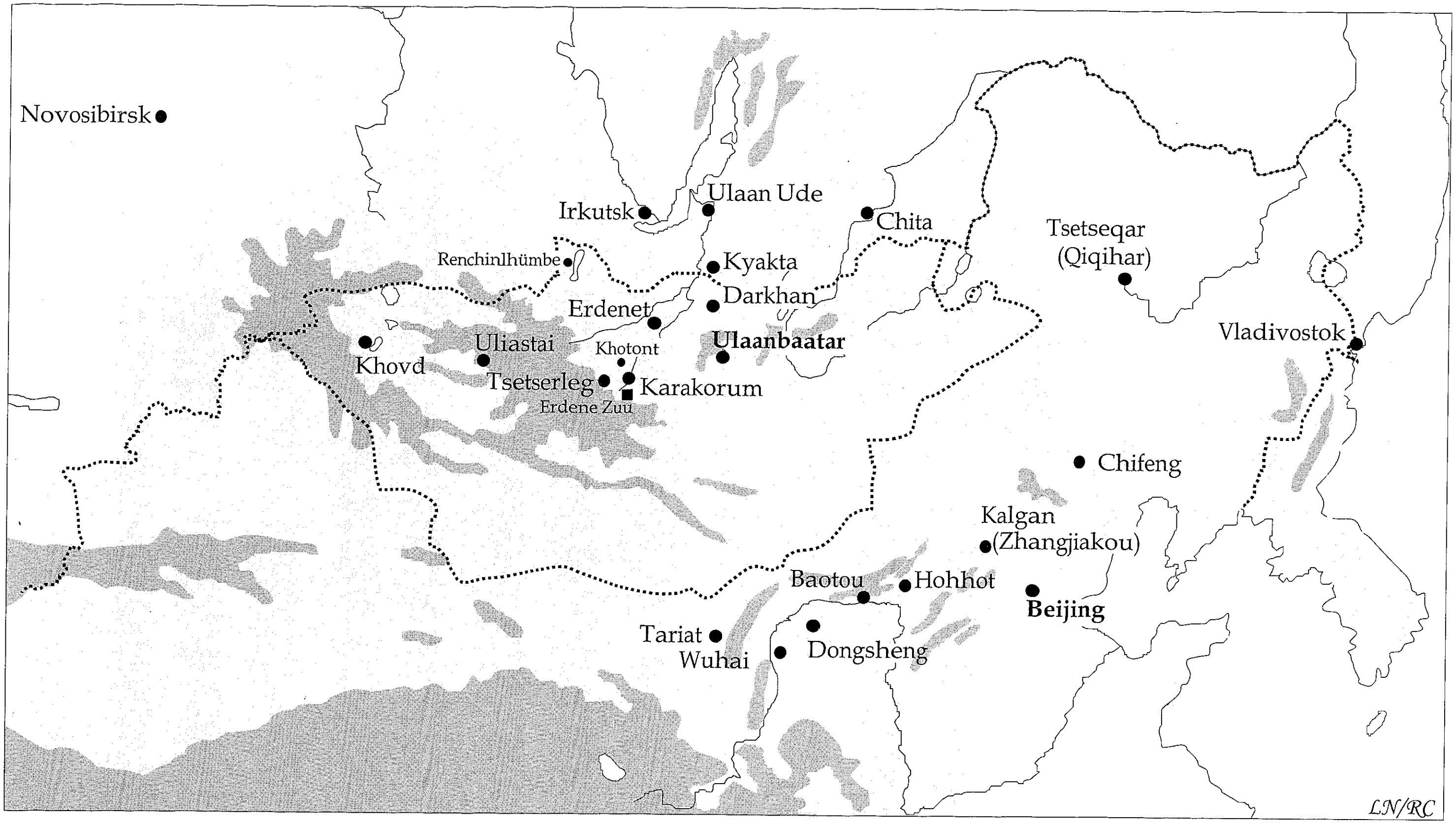
Map 1: The Mongol lands with towns before 1900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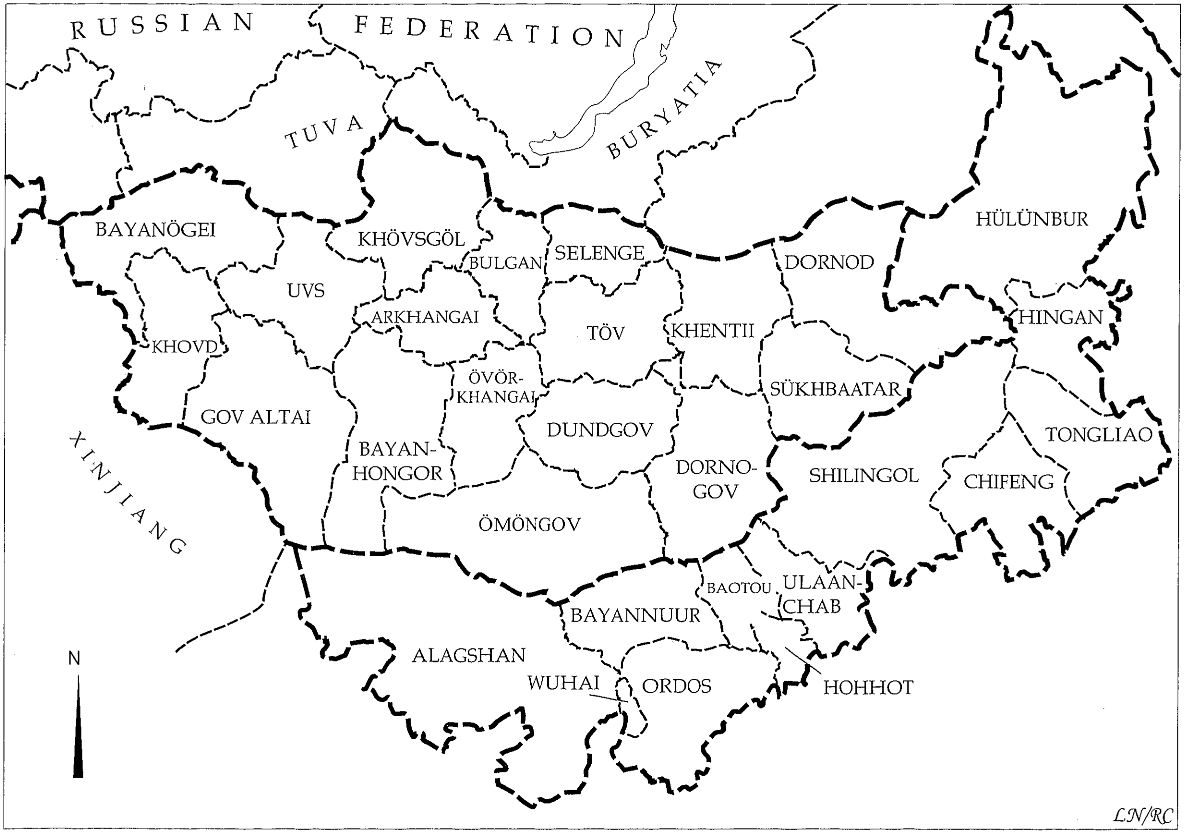
Map 2: Some cities mentioned in the text.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Map 3: Administrative divisions in Outer and Inner Mongolia: *aimag* (leagues) and *hot* (municipalities, *shi*).

1

A New Moment in Mongol History: The Rise of the Cosmopolitan City

Ole Bruun and Li Narangoa

The radical changes in the general circumstances of life and the shift from a rural to an urban orientation in a nation of previously, and still partly, pastoral people in Central Asia make up the theme of this book. From mainly historical and anthropological perspectives it examines the complex relationship between rural and urban Mongol people, settlements and identities, generated over the last century.

Few other nations have experienced changes as rapid and radical as the Mongols: from little sedentary life in 1900 to cosmopolitan city life in the 2000s; from scattered settlements to intense urbanization and demographic concentration; from nomadic pastoralism to Chinese and Soviet plan economics to market liberalism; from Buddhist monastic learning to modern education; and from imperial domination to separate autonomous and independent polities. During the same period Mongols experienced a series of political revolutions: the overthrow of Manchu rule in 1911, the Communist revolution of 1921 in Outer Mongolia, the Communist revolution of 1949 in Inner Mongolia, the Chinese Cultural Revolution of 1966, the Chinese shift to market socialism, the break-up of the Soviet Union and the political shift to democracy and private ownership at the establishment of the Mongolian republic in 1990.

Even so, the short intervals between revolutions apparently brought more significant changes than the revolutions themselves. The anti-Buddhist purges of the 1930s and the collectivization drives of the 1950s to 1970s both changed the texture of society, while the shifting international alliances in the same period dramatically changed the political power balance in the region. Above all, living spaces, material circumstances of life and social structures have been revolutionized within the span of a few generations. The entire Mongol lands have seen exceptional changes within a single century, demanding creative cultural and political responses as well as new economic strategies on the part of its inhabitants.

Mongolia conjures up images of open space, grassy steppe stretching into the horizon, mounted herders and isolated clusters of tents. In the imagination Mongolia may appear the land of vast physical space, perhaps accompanied by a narrower mental space, by virtue of the vast distances which impede communication and travel as contrasted to the simple means of transport available – mainly horses and camels. Especially for those familiar with the history of Mongol conquests of the 14th century when city after city was razed by horse-borne warriors, the idea of urban settlement seems thoroughly alien to the Mongol culture.

Yet towns and even cities have been a part of Mongolian civilization since early times. Towns first appeared in the Mongolian steppe along the caravan routes which linked China with the West through Central Asia. Karakorum [Kharakhorum], the capital city of the Mongol empire in 13th century, for example, was firmly connected with other big cities of the world by the Silk Road. The most significant town centres existing today were developed during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911).

In the twenty-first century Mongolia has become highly urbanized. For a great many Mongols, nomadic life has given way to a settled life in apartment blocks or *ger* (yurt) settlements on the fringes of a few larger cities. With the fall of communism in Russia and Outer Mongolia and the market reforms in Inner Mongolia the collective institutions which tied people to the land have disintegrated. At the same time the relative attraction of towns and cities as spaces for modern and alternative lifestyles and new avenues for social mobility has increased. The populations of urban centres like Ulaanbaatar and Hohhot have begun to swell.

These dramatic changes in Mongol lands at the same time provide rich opportunities for the study of transformation processes in a pastoral society. In particular, this volume examines those processes entailed in modernization, collectivization and decollectivization, secularization and desecularization, democratization and identity formation. A key issue is the extent to which pastoral society retains its special characteristics through these changes as compared to 'ordinary' sedentary society. A further issue of the greatest importance relates to the fact that Mongols now face cultural disintegration. Some 5 million Mongols remain under Chinese domination in Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and several other parts of China,[1] about a million live in the Russian Federation, mainly in Buryatia and Kalmykia,[2] while 2.5 million Mongols in the newly independent Mongolian Republic have embarked upon their own nation-building.

Images of Pastoralism

To better appreciate the nature of these changes, we must set aside the conventional and somewhat romantic view of Mongol nomads as isolated livestock herders living in yurts far away from civilization. In sedentary society industrialization brought unprecedented human mobility, urbanization and modernization. In Mongol nomadic society, by contrast, human mobility was not the result of modernization; it was inherent. Pre-modern Mongol society was based on long-distance trade, travel and communication. Constant movement formed part of the herding lifestyle. Long-distance communication was needed to exchange animal products with other forms of wealth, and to acquire information. People were the vital actors in driving packtrains back and forth, and Mongol men customarily engaged in these activities. There were post stations, camps and monasteries along the caravan roads. Trade took place in trade centres, built around monasteries and the palaces of Mongol princes (see chapter 2 by Alicia Campi). If horizons in sedentary agricultural societies were sometimes narrow, they were distant in Mongol nomadic society, both literally and metaphorically. After the rise of modern technology the idea of people being physically distant yet deeply engaged in global lines of communication is perhaps easier to imagine. This model serves better the understanding of traditional Mongol society than the idea of isolated tribesmen. European travellers visiting Mongol lands before the twentieth century repeatedly described the Mongols as more open and dynamic in character than their sedentary neighbours.

There is an ancient prejudice in both Western and other sedentary cultures' writings, reflected in the etymological roots of words such as 'civilization', 'cosmopolitan' and 'urbane', assuming civilization be to urban. Specific uses of 'savage' and 'pagan' for nomadic peoples on the other hand demonstrated a deep-seated assumption about their incapacity to generate higher culture. In the case of Mongolia, these assumptions have been reinforced by two specific regional incidents that brought most important changes in Mongol society during the last two hundred years. These incidents were the arrival of Chinese in large numbers, which changed the fundamental realities of life for the Mongols (especially in Inner Mongolia), and the imposition of the communist ideology of progress which set out to change the perceptions and realities of the Mongol way of life.

The Ming dynasty which ruled China until 1644 sought to keep the Mongols at bay with a combination of pay-offs, wall-building and occasional punitive raids. The Manchu (Qing) rulers who replaced the Ming, by contrast, engaged directly with the Mongol princes, giving them an ambiguous status in the Manchu empire: they were at the same time subordinate to and allies of the Manchu emperors. Like the European colonial powers, the Manchus maintained a strict system of ethnic classification designed to keep the Manchu elite and their Mongol allies distinct from the Chinese masses. This included a policy of preventing Chinese settlement in the Manchu and Mongol lands to the north.

This policy of exclusion was never more than partly successful until it eventually collapsed in the nineteenth century. Chinese began to appear in large numbers in both Manchuria and the Mongol lands. Initially, they came as traders and officials and later, especially in Inner Mongolia and Manchuria, as farmers and settlers. This Chinese influx changed the character of towns in Mongolia. Chinese middlemen bought Mongol products and dispatched them to the world. Inexperienced in dealing with credit, Mongols quickly fell into debt to Chinese traders, losing control of their own commercial economy, while Chinese political and social institutions were gradually introduced. The lines of communication with rest of the world began to slip out of the hands of the Mongols. Town life became increasingly oriented towards China alone rather than towards a multitude of different commercial and cultural partners scattered across the Eurasian continent. Towns became dominated by Chinese, while Mongols lived on their fringes. The old, overland-based cosmopolitanism of the Mongols was eroded by a new order, linking China to the world by seaborne communication; Central Asia lost its role as the 'geographical pivot of history' (Mackinder 1904). Within the time-span of a few centuries prior to socialism, Chinese and Russians alike came to consider the Mongol lands merely a backward frontier region. The 'real Mongol' was no longer a camel-train driver who conversed with Chinese, Arabs and Europeans but a lonely herder on the steppe. This latter role dominated government thinking during the communist years in both Outer Mongolia and Inner Mongolia.

The communist ideology of progress had a profound effect both on the way of life of Mongols and on the way in which Mongol traditions were judged. Marxist economic theory stressed that state-controlled industrialization was the key to prosperity and social progress; the means was the industrial proletariat which should ultimately seize power. In this thinking, traditional pastoralism would not generate the capital to fuel further development, nor would it inculcate the class identity needed for the socialist project. In Mongol communist planning, therefore, pastoralism was certain to disappear. The communist authorities looked approvingly on urbanization as the natural outcome of industrialization; cities were seen as the highest form of advance and presented the showcase of socialist progress. In contrast, the obvious freedom of nomads suggested individualism and an aversion to centralized planning, particularly in its utopian, high-modernist form as promoted by a series of Communist regimes in the second half of the 20th century (Scott 1998). In Outer Mongolia, where the Mongolian People's Republic was founded in 1924 under Soviet auspices, a steady process of urbanization changed Ulaanbaatar from a small settlement around the palace of the Bogdo Khan and the nearby Gandan monastery into a growing urban centre with large office buildings and blocks of flats. Inner Mongolia was incorporated into the People's Republic of China in 1949 and began to undergo a somewhat different transformation.[3] Whereas Soviet ideology emphasised the primacy of industry, Chinese communism valued the peasantry. Chinese policy was unsympathetic to nomadism, but rather than turning nomads into industrial workers the Chinese authorities aimed to settle the Mongols as farmers or, at least, to lure them into settlement by a mixture of pastoralism and agriculture. Both the system of agricultural collectives in Outer Mongolia (*negdel*) and the Chinese *hokou* (residence registration) system in Inner Mongolia severely reduced the mobility of the Mongols by integrating them into narrow administrative areas. Mongols, especially those who settled as farmers, lost their original cosmopolitan spirit of mobility. The only avenues for free movement were education and skilled jobs in a city environment. Thus, despite the urbanization-cum-modernization during the communist period of planned economy, people had limited choice where they settled.

Modernity is pervasive in socialist ideology and used for social mobilization. In the Chinese government's policy to push modernity in Inner Mongolia was included a change of the administration system by means of renaming the traditional Manchu–Mongolian institutions. Uradyn E. Bulag in chapter 3 argues that this cultural practice of naming was intended to overcome ethnic autonomy. In Bulag's terms it is 'alter/native modernity, that is, not just an alternative Chinese modernity but one which hinges on altering the native Mongol cultural and political institutions and properties'. This urbanization process has parallels in many parts of the world, where government policies and economic conditions have driven people away from the land and into the cities. In Mongolia, however, two remarkable things have happened in the last two decades. The first is that the movement between country and city has taken new forms. A large number of people have moved to the city, but at the same time, because of the limited opportunities for making a living there, many have bought a few animals and unpacked the family yurt in order to move back to the steppe. We may see this as expressive of a new moment in Mongol history.

Second, Mongols have begun to revive the idea of Mongol cosmopolitanism. They are restoring the Mongol tradition of connecting places in a much wider and more heterogeneous world. Their notion of cosmopolitanism is based on romantic images of a great Mongol empire that once conquered half of Eurasia and contributed to the cultural exchange between East and West, but at a more practical level, through modern education and technology, they have set out to prove that Mongol culture is as sophisticated as any other culture in the world.

The Fourth Moment

Despite the historical evidence of cities on the Mongolian steppe, a century ago a Mongol city would have seemed a contradiction in terms. Perhaps as a defensive measure, over the centuries Mongol identity was supported by and increasingly associated with the pastoral way of life. After an episode of massive social change, metropolitan cities have been firmly established in the Mongol lands, where they attract a constant flow of people from rural areas. As a consequence, the Mongol nation has become equally divided between pastoral and urban lifestyles holding seemingly contradictory values and identities, even irreconcilable grounds for nationhood. Over the last century large-scale sedentarization and urbanization have been interpreted as the immanent demise of the nomadic lifestyle. Yet it will not disappear. In fact, at the turn of the new millennium it seems that more people than ever before in Mongol history supported themselves on mobile pastoralism. Most importantly, however, the impact of the city stretches far beyond its geographical and demographic boundaries with a bearing on every pastoral community. We will argue for a new moment of mobile pastoralism, in which the city is continuously represented and decisively adopted in pastoral strategies, without obliterating the pastoral lifestyle itself.

From a first moment of mobile pastoralism under native Mongol military rule, to a second moment of pastoral-monastic society under Buddhist domination, to a third moment of modernization under Communist rule, Mongols have entered a fourth moment of divided urbanism–pastoralism, in which both the new urban citizenry and the pastoral communities are under the complex rule of a new city-based elite, international institutions and the market. This new historical moment, having considerable stability despite intrinsic poverty and great social turmoil, will presumably reach a long way into the new millennium. It is characterized by the intensified exchange between the two poles of orientation, pastoralism and urbanism, and their corresponding lifestyles. In effect, an increasing part of the population embrace them both in their lives and visions, having moved from one sector to the other, with many having reversed and repeated this movement several times in the course of their lives. The Mongol city has become a phase in the greater pastoral cycle, integrated as an institutionalised alternative in the pastoral economy.

International currents towards the end of the last century contributed to the creation of a society that was both post-socialist and post-modern, the preceding eras both having failed the Mongols. Contemporary Mongol society embraces the extremes of the modern world, from the luxuries of advanced technology, material plenty and international travel to the destitute life of jobless migrants in *ger* districts and the rural poor, struggling along with herds below a sustainable level or surviving on alms and odd jobs in township centres. The two main sections of society, city and country, are economically, socially and culturally interdependent, yet deeply contrasted. The Mongol nation is divided and in contradiction, yet retaining a full range of mobilities in lifestyles, professional affiliations, cross-cutting status positions, migration, education and trade.

Inevitably, experiences of the three preceding moments are ingrained in the fourth. The Mongol city has retained much of the flavour of a pastoral society, expressed, for instance, in interpersonal relations, work ethics, the upbringing of children and perceptions of time and space. Some cultural positions remain intact, including the independence and liberalism of traditional livestock owners.

Much scholarship on Mongols and pastoral groups in general has indicated how biased our sedentary viewpoint may be. Boundaries between pastoral and sedentary groups, rather than being primordial divisions, may customarily be crossed and population segments may flow from pastoral to sedentary communities, particularly from the uppermost and lower segments (Barth 1964). Most certainly, we should be aware that sedentarization may not at all be permanent, but frequently serve as intermediate strategies to cope with pastoral crises (Spear and Waller 1992). This points to the institutionalized alternatives that all pastoral groups tend to maintain as integral elements in their economic strategies (Salzman 1980), which tend to be orientated towards security rather than rapid accumulation or mere subsistence (Marx 1996). As we all recognize the fact that pastoral groups depend on regular exchanges with sedentary economies the question of the possible origin of nomadic groups in sedentary agricultural societies (Lattimore 1962) and, accordingly, the former's possibly limited cultural independence (Khazanov 2001), has provided powerful intellectual inspiration. Taking into account the mutual dependence of sedentary and pastoral forms of production, we now know that pastoralism, whether nomadic, semi-nomadic or just mobile, still holds a great potential in Central Asia (Humphrey and Sneath 1999), across which region it continues to make a substantial contribution to gross national products.

The unfolding prioritization of urban over rural lives after socialism has resulted in a renewed urbanization drive. But is it in fact urbanization in the conventional sense? For a start, we should distinguish between urbanization and urbanism. The city exerts its influence over large territories and urban values may be adopted by pastoral people, whose mobility and production techniques encourage advanced and specialized knowledge. Thus, in a situation of well-being urbanism may spread into pastoral communities, while settlement within a city area may in fact, particularly in economically deprived circumstances, lead to isolation and the de-urbanizing of culture (Humphrey and Sneath 1999).

Elements of rural and urban lifestyles mix with the growing pace of social change, facilitated by a new culture of modernity, modern education and growing individual mobility. New habits, styles and goods from the cosmopolitan city are adopted in rural culture as much as rural people move into urbanized areas with their animals and yurts. Thus both persons and places transcend the distinction between the rural and the urban, without obscuring its significance in common parlance. Pastoral people in great numbers move towards the cities, without this necessarily resulting in general and permanent sedentarization.

Both regional and social differentiation has occurred since the introduction of the 'market'. Country and City have evolved into a set of polarized orientations and lifestyles, offering alternative identities and interpretations of Mongol culture. This distinction is not merely formal, but is manifested in the conceptions that rural and urban Mongols have of themselves and others. The balance has been seriously disrupted since decollectivization, however, when the overall economic and technological priorities became centred on the city. Along with the urban orientation laying the foundation for a modern state-supported Mongol identity, pastoralism is historized to become an element in a glorious, common past rather than a living contribution to the present. In the process, pastoral areas and their people are both neglected and economically and socially disadvantaged.

The fourth moment of pastoralism in Mongol lands has resulted in greater challenges, intensified action and new forms of movement, frequently as improvisation, to cope with change. Constantly changing conditions for pastoral production and new parameters for social and cultural life have uprooted households in all segments of society and produced a cross-flow of population between rural and urban settings. Thus, social and economic differentiation, of which the spatial dimension is merely one among several, is surely inevitable in a market economy with an urban ideological bias and little regulation.

The transfer to market economies in all Mongol lands has disrupted established patterns of movement among pastoral people and caused increasingly complex forms of adaptation, including both shortened seasonal moves in native areas and longer-range movement into new pastures, usually closer to communication lines and markets. Households have been drawn into step-wise movement towards locations with better terms of trade or into actual migration into urban areas, but tend to retain their mobility. For instance, we may point to the fact that just over half of the entire population of Mongolia live in mobile (*ger*) accommodation.[4] Within the new complexity of market-relations, international trade and globalizing influence a seeming paradox arises. States become more closely associated with cities as, after the break-up of socialism, market economies and state administrations tend to concentrate in urbanised areas, while, conversely, pastoral people increasingly embrace the urban setting as an option in their strategies for survival. Life may become harder in rural areas, but they will not be depopulated: the pastoral way of life may be challenged, but it will not ie out. Instead, rural and urban situations are being polarized without offering secure lives in either place, thus demanding a broadened scope of strategies on the part of the Mongols.

The Historical Significance of Towns and Markets

Despite a pastoral nomadic tradition, towns and even cities were built on the Mongolian steppe from an early date (see chapters by Alicia Campi and Uradyn Bulag). We argue that ethnic interaction across the entire region and the strong division of economic activity along ethnic lines have contributed to a Mongolian identity which steadily became more attached to a rural lifestyle, even frozen as an ethnic defence against exploitation. Mongolian images of pastoralism have indeed obscured the fact that towns and trade centres, primarily built around the increasingly commercialized monasteries, continued to provide important stimuli as well as alternative lifestyles and avenues for social mobility.

Towns first appeared in Mongolia along the caravan or trade roads to the outside world. For example, Karakhorum, the capital city of the Mongol empire in the 13th century, was connected with other big cities of Eurasia by the Silk Road. Later, the border towns Kyakhta (Kyakta) in the north and Kalgan (Zhangjiakou)[5] in the south became centres for trade with Russia and China. The most significant town centres developed during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), especially after the 18th-century subjugation of all Mongol tribes by the Qing emperors. There were three main patterns of town development. First, townships arose adjacent to military camps. The Qing court set up military bases in Mongol territories for internal peace-keeping as well as against external invasion from Russia and other neighbours. For example, Khovd (Hovd, Kobdo), Uliastai (Ulyasutai) and Kyakhta (Kiachta, Khiakta, Hiagt) in the north, Qiqihaer (Tsetseqar) and Hohhot in the south[6] were built or were expanded for these purposes. Originally Mongol generals were put in charge of these towns but were later replaced by Manchu or Chinese generals (Bawden 1968).

A second pattern was the combination of lamasery and township. Monasteries were built locally (by princes, rich individuals and banner [khoshuu, Hoshuu] communities) as well as imperially by the Manchu emperors. These latter monasteries were mostly located along trade routes or in geo-politically important places (Pozdneyev 1887: 19–20). A thriving trade centre grew up around almost every large monastery, which drew large parts of its revenue from annual fairs and the flow of pilgrims. Not only their fixed location but also their strategic position at the major sources of grass and water made them natural stopping places for all kinds of travellers. Monasteries provided lodgings for pilgrims and some of them also profited from renting out various buildings as lodgings for caravaners. In effect, the monastery became an economic corporation, less engaged in production than in the accumulation of wealth: 'Accumulation of wealth in forms other than in herds (land, stores of grain and so forth) both contributed to and presupposed a more sedentary form of existence than was traditional among the Mongols' (Miller 1959: 117). Even monasteries without established trade provided ready-made markets for Chinese traders. As a result, in later imperial history more and more Mongols were drawn into trade-related activities such as transportation.

A third pattern was administrative centres giving rise to townships. The Qing court introduced territorial boundaries and set up league and banner administrations in Mongolia. Banners were led by Mongol princes with direct access to the court. These boundaries and administrative offices limited the free movements of Mongol herders, but were also intended to limit the horizontal alliance of Mongol princes and strengthen their loyalty to the Manchu court. Many princes built or supported temples close to their residences in order to attract pilgrims, traders and large numbers of people for religious ceremonies and festivals. It has been estimated that there were about 20 monasteries or temples in each banner of Inner Mongolia at the beginning of the 20th century (Miller 1959). In the later period schools were established in banner residences, further contributing to town development.

The development of towns followed the decline in feudal-like relations in pastoral production and the decline of the petty-nobility (Bawden 1968: 87). Yet the growth of towns did not give rise to a native mercantile class as such, but instead provided a growing space and opportunity for Chinese traders, later to be followed by Europeans. Mongolian commercial interests continued to be embedded in religious institutions and perhaps cloaked in spiritual pursuits. It is a vital element in historical change that the Mongol identity remained framed in a rural environment of steppe, mountain and forest, where domestic animals graze and nomadic herders draw their livelihood. Channels of Mongol social mobility were monopolized by Buddhist institutions, realized in monasteries and local administrations, while secular town-life to a large extent was constrained along ethnic boundaries. In many instances, ethnic demarcations narrowed down choices of economic activity and functioned to perpetuate Mongol antagonisms towards the Chinese sedentary agricultural-cum-urban culture.

This is far from tantamount to an inherent Mongol disdain for urban culture. Cities remained important throughout Mongolian history as capitals, markets and spiritual centres, though they did not always come to prominence on Mongol territory. It is instead through the totality of exchange relations between pastoral areas, agricultural economies, urban markets and Buddhist theocratic hubs that the true diversity of orientations is revealed: an interchange between an ethnic identification with pastoralism and a distinct drive towards spiritual, intellectual and artistic urbanism. The vital axis between pastoralism and sedentary economies and the historical importance of long-distance exchanges of animal products, wealth, people and information distinguish the Mongol pastoral culture from that of East Asian sedentary agricultural communities.

The personality of pastoralists tends to be open, expressive and prone to direct action (Salzman 2004: 14); the urban parallel is intensified in the fact that pastoralists, by means of their mobility, may separate from enemies and avoid social tensions. If we can identify persistent urbanoid traits in Mongol culture we may see a parallel in the fascination, even sense of familiarity, that Western travellers in Mongol lands over several centuries have articulated. At an historical level it has been argued for the Kasaks that these nomadic people wrestled free from feudal relations to sell their produce on a liberal market in much the same way as the new classes of workers and bourgeoisie were enabled to sell their labour and services in the European city after the industrialization (Light 1994). Morten Pedersen in chapter 4 shows the ramifications of cultural, religious and commercial centres in a rural Mongolian locality.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, town development in northern and southern Mongolia displayed common characteristics, those of trading towns dominated by Chinese. The Mongol population tended to be concentrated in monasteries and banner residences or, in some cases, consist of vagrants and day-labourers living in yurts at the fringe of towns, presumably originally being herders driven away by poverty in the countryside. The number of towns in Inner Mongolia was larger than that in northern Mongolia; population density was larger; the number of Chinese migrants grew rapidly; and the territory of Inner Mongolia was simply closer to the centre of the Qing Empire.

After the collapse of the Qing in 1911 and especially from the 1920s urban development took different forms in the north and south. Mongols in northern Mongolia declared their independence and in 1921 all Chinese troops stationed in Uliastai and Khovd were expelled from the country. Three years later the People's Republic of Mongolia was founded. Since then towns in Outer Mongolia were developed by Mongols, later assisted by Russians, rather than by Chinese. In Inner Mongolia, however, Chinese migration did not stop but increased steadily.

By 1928 the Chinese Nationalist Government had unified China and placed all of Inner Mongolia under newly created Chinese provinces, such as Rehe, Chahar, Suiyuan, Ningxia and Qinghai, despite its lacking the ability to control them. The Inner Mongolian autonomous movements during the 1930s and 1940s failed to achieve real autonomy, however, and Chinese were migrating into Inner Mongolia as before. Neither the population composition of towns changed nor did township characteristics turn into something Mongolian. In 1947 Inner Mongolia was under Chinese communist control and in 1949 became part of the People's Republic of China. Since then the urban development of Inner Mongolia has become part of Chinese national development programmes, distinctly dominated by Chinese.

Despite these differences in population composition in Outer and Inner Mongolia, the ideology behind urban development was similar: the development of a socialist modern state. Both were subjected to Marxist historiography. In Inner Mongolia, especially during the Chinese cultural revolution, everything before 1949 was considered feudal. In Outer Mongolia after the 1921 revolution the old Mongolia was depicted as a barbarous sub-civilization. The appearance of the new modern towns was very similar, dominated by grey, Soviet-style concrete apartment blocks.

Both Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, and Hohhot, the capital of Inner Mongolia, have the traditional Mongolian dwelling, the yurt or *ger*. Ironically, this key Mongolian symbol has become the emblem of poverty and backwardness in Ulaanbaatar, while the few yurts displayed in Hohhot have become a symbol of ethnicity and one of the main points that distinguish Hohhot from other cities in China.

Secularisation, Religious Revival and the New Urban Bias

The ideology of socialist modernization was conditional on the secularization of religious institution. As derived from the view of religion as the opium of the people, Buddhist monks were conceived as feudal elements exploiting the masses and hindering modernization. However, reducing or eliminating Buddhist influence on Mongol society proved a cumbersome task.

Images of pastoralism perhaps obscured the fact that the increasingly commercialised monasteries played a pivotal role as markets and cultural centres. From the late 16th century Buddhism had absorbed elements of native cosmology and been integrated into the Mongol way of life. The monastery, apart from its spiritual function, became the centre of education, medicine, philosophy, astrology and art. Lamas were not only religious specialists, but also teachers, medical professionals and astrologists as much as they were often shepherds, artisans and caravan guides. Instead of mobilizing the existing potential of Buddhist monasteries and lamas, the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) followed Soviet religious policy to the extreme of abolishing religious institutions altogether in order to create a new modern mass-society.

The first religious purge came in the late 1920s in the newly established Republic. The property of monasteries was confiscated and lamas were persecuted. The extreme leftist policy caused much resentment in the population and some high ranking lamas fled to Inner Mongolia. A policy turn of the MPR government allowed lamas to return to their monasteries and gave them back their herds, but taxed their incomes. This first attempt with a soft policy was a reflection of the Mongolian response to the Japanese policy of embracing Mongol Buddhism in Inner Mongolia during the 1930s (Narangoa 1998). The government of the MPR was aware of this Japanese involvement in Inner Mongolia and of their possible aim to influence Buddhists in the MPR. Hence the soft policy was intended to ease social discontent stirred up by the leftist deviation and to prevent lamas from seeking refuge in Inner Mongolia.[7] This benign policy did not last long. During the second half of the 1930s religious purges were resumed, gradually becoming uncompromising. In the second half of the 20th century in Inner Mongolia things happened in similar vein. In the Land Reform and especially during the Chinese Cultural Revolution lamas were purged and monasteries destroyed.

Both in Outer Mongolia and Inner Mongolia up until the Second World War almost every village and town had at least one temple or monastery,[8] but by the end of the Chinese Cultural Revolution very few were left; some buildings remained as stores houses or village cowsheds. The monasteries' and temples' former glory of spiritual, cultural and market centres was gone from the urban and rural landscapes. A few big monasteries survived as museums and tourist attractions, functioning essentially as showcases for 'religious freedom' in the socialist states.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1990 monasteries have been restored and religious activities resumed to the effect that we now witness a religious revival in the Mongolian and Buryat Republics. The previous forced 'secularization' process of the 20th century eliminated the institutional role of religion, inducing individuals to keep their religious beliefs and practices private.[9] Freedom of religious practice is now guaranteed by the constitution and democratic politics backs the restoring of religious institutions and the return of monks to monasteries (see chapter 9 by Hanna Havnevik and Agata Bareja-Starzynska and chapter 12 by Tsymzhit Vanchikova). In Inner Mongolia, too, religious institutions are reviving because of the influence of the market economy and the wish to attract tourists, but far more cautiously and under heavier control.

People perform or support religious activities for various purposes. Politicians may utilize religion to promote a unified national identity or more pragmatically to increase their personal votes for the next election. Ordinary people may rely on religion to satisfy their spiritual needs, solve their immediate problems in life or to secure their future happiness. Some aspects of religious traditions are carried out as in the past, but other aspects will inevitably respond to new social and political needs. Li Narangoa and Li Altanjula in chapter 10 show that the Mongol traditional form of healing, Shamanist bonesetting, has lost its religious character and has been adapting to the modern western medicine to adjust to the political, social and economic environment of Inner Mongolia.

In the state of Mongolia democracy, market economy and independent nationhood have become the main carriers of development. As in the past, however, urbanity remains a symbol of advance and modernity. The urban bias is visible in the reconstruction of religious institutions. In the last decade a large number of temples have been built in all parts of the country, but from a socio-political point of view supporting the temples in the cities is a more effective way for political leaders to display their cultural policies. In economic terms, too, temples and monasteries in cities are more profitable. An urban location means more income for both the institution and the state because it creates easy access for pilgrims and tourists, and the larger monasteries may attract financial assistance from outside of the country. Thus globalization contributes to the process of key religious institutions moving to the city.

In the past Buddhism was the state religion in Mongolia and at an early stage was compromised with elements of Shamanism, while ousting it. A considerable revival of Buddhism was set in motion at independence, as examined by Hanna Havnevik and Agata Bareja-Starzynska in chapter 9. In the fourth moment, however, the age of globalization, Buddhist monasteries have to compete in a new spiritual market with other religious currents such as Christianity from the West, Islam from the Muslim lands, other Buddhist schools from Asia and Shamanism, which has begun to revive with foreign support. Buddhist monasteries in Mongolia are faced with a choice between relying on Tibetan institutional forms or developing an indigenous Mongolian form of Buddhism.

Globalization and the urban bias has begun to affect the most remote rural element of Mongol religion, Shamanism. As Laetitia Merli reports in chapter 11 the social, political and economic changes of the last decade have pushed many people into poverty. Being without social security in this modern world they turn to the old 'tradition', approaching shamans and lamas for comfort, healing or advice. Different forms of Shamanistic institutions compete for authenticity. Today many shamans are active in urban areas of Mongolia, especially Ulaanbaatar, where they have become part of the urban business world.

Pastoralism, Markets and the Environment

The advent of Communism in the early-to-mid 20th century resulted in incessant efforts at collectivization and modernization. Pastoral communities were hurled into pervasive changes of ownership patterns, lifestyle, consumption, education, medicine, cultural life and religious practices, all under centralized authority and control. The socialist planned economies made massive efforts to industrialize pastoral areas in order to integrate their inhabitants into the new social and economic order. Peter Marsh in chapter 13 outlines the key role of rural cultural centres in promoting socialist modernization and urban values among the herder population. Today these centres continue on reduced budgets while seeking to define new local area characteristics and identities in response to the growing rural-urban divide.

International Communism collapsed in the late twentieth century. As a consequence of the ensuing market reforms and loss of jobs thousands of people were driven back to primary occupations. As noted above, the number of nomadic herders grew in Mongolia and after the economic liberalization and abandonment of subsidies to state enterprises in Chinese-dominated Inner Mongolia the number of herder-agriculturalists there is also greater now than before.

Nomadic, semi-nomadic, transhumant or 'mobile' pastoralism continues to be a vital ingredient in the livelihood of the Mongols and despite massive urbanization the contribution of pastoral production to GDP has remained impressive. Pastoral production is beset by many prejudices. Far from being an ancient and inefficient form of production, mobile pastoralism remains imperative as a provider of livelihood for rural people and of wealth for urban societies in Central Asia. Undoubtedly, the maintenance of herd mobility is a key to sustainable agriculture across the region, while at the same time modern technology may provide important new inputs (Humphrey and Sneath 1999: 3).

David Sneath in chapter 6 explores how Mongolian representations of rural and urban life provide contrasting images. The urban setting is associated with technology, modernity and centres of political power. Rural life, by contrast, is associated with the ancient lifestyle of nomadic pastoralism, authentic Mongolian culture, simplicity and tradition. In reality, however, in rural districts social networks have long crossed the boundaries between mobile and settled aspects of Mongolian life. Products and people (particularly children) move between the settlements and the mobile pastoral encampments, to create a social matrix that includes both rural and urban contexts. Social networks continue to link those in the political and economic centres with families in remote pastoral regions. Many of those who have moved to rural districts have tapped into their networks of kith and kin to gain help and advice with livestock herding.

Movement and Reorientation

The successful herder and popular philosopher Namkhainyambuu experienced the entire transformation from private to collective ownership of herds and the dramatic institutional changes in pastoral society since the 1950s. Mary and Morris Rossabi in chapter 8 trace his life and work as a dedicated modernizer, propagandist, philosopher and book author, whose own life trajectory accurately depicts Mongolia's modern history. Just as this charismatic herder ended his life path in a modern city environment, far from the rural setting of his own life work, the city exerts its attraction on a growing number of herders, who move into urban areas both as households and as individuals.

Ann Fenger Benwell in chapter 5 depicts the discrepant currents of Mongolian women increasingly gaining access to education and executive positions, while at the same time becoming more significant in poverty statistics and still harder hit by domestic violence. Perhaps to a higher extent than men, Mongolian women reflect a growing social differentiation in society. Along similar lines Ole Bruun in chapter 7 examines the attraction of the city to herders in a rural setting and the effect of rural-to-urban migration. As a powerful filtering machine the city absorbs the talented and the wealthy, representing the uppermost layers of rural communities, but at the same time serves as a refuge for impoverished herder families. Widely dispersed kinship relations contribute to a developing pattern of a dual affiliation bridging rural and urban livelihood locations.

The Communist nation-states bisected the Mongols between Russian and Chinese domains. Communist states also introduced the modern city to the Mongols and moulded new distinctions between of cities, towns and rural areas, clearly subjugated to a city-based power hierarchy. But Communist modernity also established new distinctions between urban and rural, centre and periphery, modern and traditional, educated and illiterate, and revolutionary and contra-revolutionary.

While most Mongols still identify themselves with the glorious history of their expansion in the 13th and 14th centuries as well as with pastoralism and Buddhism (and in some regions with Shamanism), the 20th century division of Mongols generated competition for authenticity. In ethnic terms, Khalkha Mongols claim to be the authentic Mongols originating from Chinggis Khan's native place, the Mongolian heartland where a new independent republic has been founded, while ascribing to other Mongols lessening degrees of authenticity. The Khalka Mongols consider themselves the 'real' and 'pure' Mongols, as compared to those in Inner Mongolia (seen as hybrid Mongols if not entirely Chinese), and those in Buryatia and Kalmykia (seen as Russians). The people of Buryatia and Khalmykia may identify themselves as Mongols, but most of them, especially after their lands received the status of Republics, see themselves as Buryats and Khalmyks. The case of Inner Mongolia is more complex. Inner Mongols generally identify with the Mongolians of the independent Mongolia, which for them is the romantic 'homeland'. Being in a state of rejected 'Mongolness' they tend to see themselves as 'Inner Mongols', different from 'Outer Mongols' (Bulag 1998).

In terms of lifestyles, too, rural and urban Mongols compete for authenticity: rural Mongols accuse urban Mongols of forgetting traditional Mongol essence and culture, such as horse-riding and offering hospitality, one of the most valued customs in the nomadic culture. In contrast, urban Mongols contend that they now represent the most advanced Mongol culture, seeing the rural Mongols as backward. The introduction of the market economy intensified rural-urban distinctions. Collapsing state enterprises and the reconstructed social institutions produced large numbers of jobless people, who tend to concentrate in towns and cities. In this intense mixture of job-hunting and business-seeking differences between rural and urban mentalities surface and clash. Urban people become more jealous of their rights as city dwellers and accuse outsiders of taking their jobs or encroaching on their business profits without having proper skills and education.

Mongols face tremendous challenges in reorienting themselves from a collective socialist ideology to liberal democratic thinking, from a planned economy to market economy, and from state-led secularization to religious revival. Their way of life has come to include mass drift and migration, even repeated movements between country and city, resulting in a breakdown of old concepts of class and belonging as well as producing renewed social strife. With the rise of the metropolitan city a multitude of ideological and religious currents are sweeping over the Mongol lands. It is an age of reviving Buddhism and reinstalling Shamanism, while popular thought delves into a wealth of new spiritual merchandize. Clearly living in an age of opportunity and challenge, new inspiration and old shortcomings, Mongols are adapting to a freer but tougher society, where both fate and faith become individualized. The key factors in the new society – urbanism, international institutions and the market – may exert their attraction on all Mongols but embrace only some, while leaving out others.

In the fourth moment national boundaries are more easily transgressed, allowing Mongols from all lands to interact more freely, while, at the same time, modernity, international trade and travel pose new challenges to a Mongol identity. It involves an intricate process of rethinking and revaluating old ethnic relations as much as establishing new bonds and creating new 'others', both internally among Mongols and externally among nations. Mongol identity has adopted new reflexive elements, including, for instance, elite interpretations of Mongol nomadic civilization for a Western audience, in order to gain a foothold on the global arena.

Being subject to globalization the concepts of nation-state and nationalism gain new meaning as we move towards new supra-national structures. In the Mongol lands, we are perhaps witnessing a separation of nationhood and nationalism, the former potentially linking all Mongols in the recognition of common roots in their languages and nomadic civilization, and the latter carving out independent polities within East- and Central-Asian *real-politik.*

Authors' Note

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Notes

1 According to the 'Date of the Fourth National Census, July 1, 1990' there are a bit more than 4.8 million Mongols in China, cited in 'Population and Ethnic Groups', *http: //www.asia-planet.net/china/population.htm,* accessed on 1 March 2005.

2 The total population of Kalmykia is 316,000. The Kalmyks (Mongols) make up 45.4% of this, *http: //www.russiatrek.com/rp_kalmykia.shtml.* There are about 350,000 Buryats out of total population of 1,049,000 in Buryatia, http: //www.rusnet.nl/encyclo/b/buryatia.shtml, accessed on 1 March 2005.

3 Both Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, and Hohhot, the capital of Inner Mongolia, have the Mongolian dwelling, the yurt or *ger*. Ironically, this key Mongolian symbol has become the emblem of poverty and backwardness in Ulaanbaatar, while the few yurts displayed in Hohhot have become a symbol of ethnicity and one of the main points that distinguish Hohhot from other cities in China.

4 Even in urban areas they make up 28 per cent (NSOM 2001: 55).

5 Kalgan (Zhangjiakou in Chines) was a town located on the Chinese border rather than in the traditional Mongol land. It however consisted of a right-bank Chinese town and a left-bank Mongol commercial section. For the Chinese it was the 'gate' to Mongolia and for the Mongols it was the 'gate' to China. It linked the road between Ulaanbaatar and Beijing, as well as Dolonnuur which was one of the religious centres in Inner Mongolia. Kalgan was developed as a military and trade centre under Manchu rule (*Columbia Lippincott gazetteer of the world* 1962); also see *Travels in Mongolia, 1902,* 2000).

6 Qiqihaer was set up by the Manchu court as a military fortress in a Mongol area in the 17th century, and moved Chinese. Today, Qiqihaer is located in the Chinese province

of Heilongjiang. (*Columbia Lippincott gazetteer of the world* 1962). Before the 17th century Hohhot was a more religious and commercial place, but in the 17th century the Manchu court set up a military base for the battles against the remaining Mongol tribes in the north and west (*Huhehaote shi zhi*, 1999).

7 Knowing that Buddhism was deeply rooted in the Mongolian way of life and being aware of the resentment caused by the early harsh anti-religious policy in the Mongolian People's Republic, the Japanese policy makers acted intelligently. They supported Mongol Buddhism as an inevitable part of Mongol identity to mobilize Mongols and to put themselves in a better light in contrast to the Soviet policy in the other part of Mongolia. The Japanese project was for Mongol religious and secular leaders to understand the necessity of certain Buddhist reforms. Part of the project was educating lamas in modern science such as medicine and natural sciences, encouraging them to attend to industrial production and reducing the number of lamas through examination.

8 There were also many monasteries built by Manchu emperors. Some of them had very much an administrative function. For example, the monastery in Dolonnuur was directly part of the Manchu administrative machinery for controlling the Mongols. Apart from the general monastic administrators, there was a separate staff for the Office of the Imperial Seals (Miller 1959: 61).

9 For example, in Inner Mongolia, during the Cultural Revolution house altars were removed, but people hid Buddha's picture behind a mirror and worshipped secretly. Similarly, in the Mongolian People's Republic religious objects were removed from the sacred place in the *ger*, but stored in boxes and used for special occasions.

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2

The Rise of Cities in Nomadic Mongolia

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It is not surprising that a full study of the rise of cities in nomadic Mongolia has not been undertaken. The Mongolian plateau in the heart of Central Asia is an arid, rigorously cold environment of steppe grasslands and desert with northern forests. It is the traditional home of nomadic livestock herders with mixed species, dependent on natural fodder in seasonal pastures. Much of the land is not suitable for developing intensive agriculture and livestock husbandry without great investment of support mechanisms. Now at the beginning of the 21st century, nomadic life and culture in Mongolia not only continues, but also has been reconstituted and reinvigorated. Migratory nomads and their importance to the economy of the nation survives, although the consequences, positive and negative, are not necessarily clear-cut.

Mongolia, particularly during its communist experience from 1921 to 1990, underwent various forms of intensive sedentarization. Prior to this, the rise of towns is less understood. The history of urbanization per se has never been researched. There are allusions to the process of city-building in local Mongol histories of the country's national and provincial capital centers, which will be cited in this chapter. The Mongolian historian Sanjdorj has investigated border horse markets and the special settlements connected with Chinese traders appearing in Mongolia as early as the late 1500s and 1600s (Sanjdorj 1980: 28). Mongolist C.R. Bawden has written that: 'Permanent centers of population began to grow up around the monasteries, especially Urga, and administrative centers such as Uliastai (Uliyasutai or Uliasutai), Khovd (Hovd) and Khiakta (Kyakta), and from the eighteenth century onwards markets and farms made their appearance there' (Bawden 1968: 13). However, the story is known only in bits and pieces.

This chapter is an attempt to find the small pieces, break new ground in categorizing them, and begin the debate. It will analyze the origin of 32 major cities and towns found from the 2000 census and divide them into 5 categories, based on origin of the city: (1) trade and agriculture, (2) monastic, (3) military, (4) political, and (5) industrial.

It will be noted that old historical trade and agricultural cities and some monastic cities survived into the modern era mainly because their geographic locations were conducive for sedentary economic life. Newer cities on the north (Russian) and south (Chinese) borders, which have a prominent role in fostering Mongolia's trade along its sole north–south rail line and are the targets for free trade zone development, are predicted to do well in the future. However, the politically designed provincial capital cities, especially Gobi, and Mongolia's industrial towns from the 1960s are the city categories most in danger of contracting and dying. This is because their geographical positions often were not well selected, and because the industries they were created to service have gone bankrupt and have little chance of reviving in the short term. The capital, Ulaanbaatar, is by far the most energetic Mongolian city, and the explosion of its population, which is lured away from other settlements, is a severe drain on the nation's resources.

Mongolia's future development surely will involve further city expansion and planning. Attention must be paid to the nation's urbanization issues, but it is best to start from a review of the historical record. It is hoped that such analysis will provoke necessary discussion among researchers and policymakers to make sensible and attainable plans for sustainable urbanization in Mongolia.

Framework of Analysis

During the past decade there have been researchers examining the concept of the 'end of nomadism' in Mongolia. The work of Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath (1999), Fred Scholz 'Der Nomudismus ist tot' ['Nomadism is dead'], Joerg Janzen (2001), and international symposia organized by the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations under UNESCO,[1] and Congresses of the International Association for Mongol Studies reflect the controversies surrounding this whole topic. In the past and the present, political and economic analysts, whether inspired by Soviet collectivization policies or Western free market modernization principles, usually equated sedentarization with civilization and development.[2] The Mongolian Government was and continues to be encouraged to actively monitor and guide migratory life toward the goal of assisting sedentarization of the populace for the sake of better health, education, sustainable environment, poverty alleviation, and national security. The most recent UNDP sponsored study by Keith Griffin in 2001 continues to reflect these anti-nomadic, pro-sedentarization views of development. (Griffin 2003).

Such ideas emanate from sociological explanations concerning the rise of cities in primitive cultures. According to these theories, the Paleolithic Age ends with the rise of agriculture and the Age of Agriculture covers the Full Neolothic

Age. The appearance of cities is considered a great milestone in human civilization. For example, it has been said: 'The appearance of cities (about 3000 BC) begins the Age of Civilization; the Bronze Age began shortly after this time' (Jones 1966: 12). Basing theories on what happened in the Near East and India, scientists concluded that tribes that adopted agriculture gave up their migratory life and became sedentary, establishing permanent homes, which were grouped together to provide mutual protection. 'Village life automatically increased the complexity of social and political organization' (Jones 1966: 20). Villages grew up at points where trade routes converged, generally along navigable rivers, simplifying communication and transportation.

Social scientists equated societal size and complexity, and 'Despite great environmental and technological diversity in these cross-cultural samples, most theorists have evoked population pressure on food supply as the source of stress to which organizational change is a response' (Carneiro 1970). Thus growth of culture is usually seen as connected to environment and geographic location, and an environment favorable to primitive agriculture and sedentary life was important for the 'rise of civilization.' In the valleys water control made possible concentrations of agriculturalists who lost their dependency on herds of grazing animals. Extensive pastoral nomadism appeared in North China and Mesopotamia on grasslands, with 'mixed economies' depending on rainfall agriculture and some domestic herds (Service 1975: 249).

So where does the harsh climate and nomadic life of the Mongols fit into this picture? Where are the early Mongolian cities at natural trade points? How were they historically maintained in a land with almost no agriculture for sustainability? The commonly accepted theory explains that early farming, which was widespread in the Neolithic period, did not prevail. Instead the steppes of Mongolia became dominated by mounted pastoral nomadism. The military mobility and predatory raiding of the nomads dominated the mixed economies, so the scattered villages were easily dominated. 'Increasingly, villagers tended either to join in a fully nomadic way of life, or to move to the valleys in search of the protection afforded by the developing cities – whose defensive arrangements were becoming increasingly effective. Finally, it appears, two distinct kinds of societies coalesced, their modes of life irreconcilably opposed. (Service 1975: 250). Yet, anthropologists such as Elman Service, citing Owen Lattimore, claim that the polarization in the two economies resulted in a symbiotic as well as competitive interrelationship to meet their populations' resource needs. Warfare was sporadic but trade was continually necessary (Service 1975: 250–251; Lattimore 1961: 482–483).

Furthermore, it is important to remember that sedentarization is not exactly the same as urbanization and city building. The two concepts share many similarities, and, in Mongolia, are closely tied to economic policies of the government. Caroline Humphrey has discussed the difference between the process of sedentarization and urbanization, noting that there also is a distinction between urbanization which includes a tendency for more static dwellings and decreased seasonal mobility, and urbanism which identifies the integration between rural districts and metropolitan cities (Humphrey 1999: 179–217, 200). She notes that throughout Inner Asia in the late 20th Century, as well as in Mongolia, there has been a change towards more sedentary households and increase in population in administrative centers (Humphrey 1999: 188–189)[3]. Mongolia, however, still stands out as the society with the highest number of herders with mobile dwellings (Humphrey 1999: 185)[4]. In Mongolia mobile felt tents (*ger*) are often static residences in sedentary communities, ringing the outskirts of towns and large cities alike. There are even examples of district administrative centers which move seasonally (Humphrey 1999: 186). Humphrey also defines sedentarization as connected to the degree of use of fixed structures, such as winter sheds, fenced pastures or wells, and gardens, as well as the number of people who do not move, and the average length of the migrations of those who do. Her research in the 1990s in Buryat Russian and Inner Mongolian areas reveals the same phenomenon that independent Mongolia is today experiencing – sedentarization and urbanism are not permanent states but may go in reverse (Humphrey 1999: 205, 216). This phenomenon was predicted by Philip Carl Salzman in 1980: 'processes of sedentarization seem neither irresistable nor irreversible, but rather are one phase in – what has throughout history been – a recurring oscillation' (Salzman 1980: vii). Dan Aronson of McGill University has called this settling and desettling (Aronson 1980: 173). This is in contradiction to the more pessimistic views that rural-urban migration of nomads leads to sedentarization with loss of nomadic cultural elements and values and westernization (Janzen 2001: 237).

Urban Development: Establishing Categories

Since there are only a few ancient Mongol and foreign written sources about the establishment of Mongolian cities, it was thought that rather than beginning with historical cities a better way to examine urbanization was to look at Mongolian towns and cities in 2000 and try to trace back their histories. Census data from the 1990, 1995 and 2000 censuses were examined to extract names of modern towns and cities, and then local gazetteers, dictionaries, standard national histories and even tourist guides were reviewed to determine the histories of the individual cities. Rather than concentrating on statistics re the size and growth of population, attention was placed on the reason for the city's establishment and the natural, economic and political environment of the city's development. Population statistics for modern towns are taken from the 2000 census, when obtainable. Mongols tend to give *aimag* (province) population statistics and not always give city population statistics – perhaps this indicates the migratory nature of a good part of the 'settled' population. It is assumed that more and more local histories will be written and published as tourism and industry diversifies throughout the country. However, at this point, when Mongol cities are not many more than the old and new capital cities, *aimag* (province) centers, and some border crossing points, this type of simple analysis can produce some interesting results.

The 2000 census states that out of a population of 2.4 million, about 1.4 million or 58 per cent of Mongolians live in urban communities and 1 million (42 per cent) live in rural areas. Comparing these figures to the 1990 and 1995 censuses, we find that in 1990 with a total population of 2.1 million, 1.2 million (57 per cent) was urban and 0.9 million (43 per cent) was rural. In 1995 with a total population of 2.25 million, 1.15 million (51 per cent) was urban and 1.1 million (49 per cent) was rural. The capital city of Ulaanbaatar throughout the decade consistently gained a great deal of population, swelling from 543,600 in 1990 to 786,500 in 2000. (MSY 2001: 37) One should note that such swings in percentage of urban vs. rural numbers in the last decade support Humphrey's conclusion that sedentarization and urbanization can reverse. Furthermore, these statistics do not explain how 'urban' is defined from the point of view of Humphrey's static household. It is known that many of these 'urbanites' live in mobile *ger*s, but it is not known from these statistics to what extent the populace is mobile. What percentage of these individuals still make seasonal migrations because of herding? How many have permanent versus mobile *ger*? Do the statistics really tell the whole story about 'urban life' in Mongolia?

Putting aside such questions, it is useful to look at the National Statistical Office of Mongolia's definition of 'urban': 'The urban share comprises population of *aimag* centers, the capital city and villages' (MSY 2001: 35). Unfortunately, the names of these urban sites are not published in the census. However, Alan J.K. Sanders' *Historical Dictionary of Mongolia* has an appendix 'Administrative Gazetteer' which appears to be taken from the *National Atlas 1990* (*Undesniy Atlas*), with additions from 1992 and 1994 (Sanders 1996: 302–312). The appendix divides *sum*s (rural districts), *horoo* (urban settlements), and hot (towns). Utilizing this classification, Mongolia's 21 *aimag*s have 21 urban settlements and 31 towns within them. For the purposes of this study, all *aimag* centers or capitals, and the special cities of Sharin Gol, Choir, Mardai, Tosontsengel, Karakorum, Altan Bulag, Baganuur City, Zamin Uud, Terelj, and Ulaanbaatar including Nalaikh were researched. This means 30 of the towns were identified. The old cities in ruins of Avarga and Kherlen Bar Khot also will be mentioned, but not included in the total of 32 cities and towns, which are covered to some degree in this chapter's analysis.

A classification of these urban settlements can be established in order to better understand the development of the cities, and perhaps even predict their future vitality. Mongol cities are placed in one of five categories, which have been named: Trade and Agriculture Cities, Monastic Cities, Military Cities, Political Cities, and Industrial Cities. Towns and cities have been designated as one of the above categories based on the origin of the city. Some, but not many of these urban settlements, could be put into more than one category.

It should be noted that one cannot really understand the development of cities in modern Mongolia without recognizing that the trading settlements which started out as horse markets in Southern or Inner Mongolia (now in the PRC), in the vicinity of the Great Wall, have played a vital role. Because these towns and cities are no longer within the confines of the state of Mongolia, they will not be discussed. However, it is clear from reading early Chinese accounts going back two thousand years, that Chinese settlers and nomadic peoples had the custom of establishing border trading depots and that as China grew, these depots acquired settled peoples and even agriculturalists. In Ming Dynasty times (1368–1644) there are many accounts of Mongolian tribal leaders attacking China and demanding the right to open trade horse markets all along the border. One of the first was opened during the reign of Hsiao Tsung (1488) in response to the demands of Batmonkh Khaan (Sanjdorj 1980: 8).

These usually ran for not more than half a month and goods were exchanged by barter. Sometimes such horse markets became vibrant cities, such as Xi'ning (Sining), Kalgan, Shuangfu (Hsuang Fu), even Hohhot. Trading in horse markets on the frontier was the basic form of trade relations between Mongolia and China throughout history and this model certainly influenced the development of other trade horse markets north in Mongolia.[5] Sanjdorj has accessed to the Manchu records in Mongolia's National Archives. He indicates that 'in official documents and original sources up to the 1690s one finds only a few references to Mongols going to the Chinese frontier to sell horses and other livestock, but no references at all to any Chinese traders coming to Khalkh (Khalkha, Halh) Mongolia to trade' (Sanjdorj 1980: 23).

Trade and Agricultural Cities

Trade and Agriculture cities are the few known historical settlements in Mongolia that pre-date the Manchu Chinese period. They follow the historical development model of cities worldwide – that is, they were established in ecological environments which were conducive for sedentary life because of agriculture or trade. These cities are in the traditional heartland of Chinggis Khan and his tribe and in areas of Mongolia which had contacts with pre-Mongol peoples. Some sites even pre-date the Mongol people themselves.

Karakorum

The most famous old settlements are the Orkhon Valley deer stone and runic Turkic sites near the Mongolian Empire capital of Karakorum, which indicate that this region was well known to many different tribes prior to the arrival of the Mongols. Even Karakorum's name likely is from Turkic Harherem – 'black wall' (Sanders 1996: 113). Today there are many stele relics but little else yet excavated to indicate what peoples built permanent living structures in this rich steppe. However, the Persian historian Juvaini in 1260 in *his History of the World Conqueror*, wrote that the Uighur Turks believed the Orkhon to be their original home some 500 years prior to the rise of Buqu Khan (Kwanten 1979: 32) , who brought Manichaeism to his people. 'There are also the ruins of a town and a palace on the banks of this river, of which the name is Ordu-Baligh though it is now called Ma'u-Baligh. Outside the ruins of the palace, opposite the gate, there lie stones engraved with inscriptions, which we have seen ourselves' (Juvaini 1997: 54–55). Juvaini explains that the Mongol Khans raised up these stones and also a great stone tablet, which is thought to be a reference to the trilingual inscription in Chinese, Turkish and Sogdian in praise of Uighur ruler Ai tengride qut bulmish alp bilge from the 730s (Kwanten 1979: 38–39). Michael Prawdin claims that Karakorum was built up on the old capital of the Turkic Naimans, early enemies of Chinggis (Prawdin 1961: 205).

Other Mongolian historians assert that the site of Karakorum was chosen and occupied by Chinggis Khan himself in 1220,[6] or selected by his political adviser, Yelu Chutsai (Baabar 1999: 32).[7] It is said that Chinggis declared 'Perhaps my children will live in stone houses and walled towns – not I' (Prawdin 1961: 205). Karakorum officially was made the Mongol Empire's capital by the second khan, Ögedei, in 1235 (Sanders 1996: 113). However, according to the Chinese *Yuan shih*, it was the 10th year of his reign or 1238 (Cleaves 1986: 213, note 26). One should note that there is no special mention of Karakorum as a capital in *The Secret History of the Mongols*.[8]

Juvaini described the building of Ögedei's palace at Karakorum in a nook upon a hillside where the Khan liked to pass by on his way to and from winter quarters. He encouraged some agriculture and tree planting. A wall was constructed around a roughly oblong town, with a longer axis running north-south for 2500 meters and an east-west width of 1500 meters which grew smaller southwards. The city walls were not more than two meters high with a wattle fence along the top. The moat in front of the wall was a meter and a half across and about a meter deep. Such minor fortifications likely meant the Mongols did not expect attack (Sobti 2000: 289; Phillips 1969: 97). Karakorum remained the capital for 40 years until Khubilai Khan moved it to Beijing. We know much about its layout because it was described by William of Rubruck,[9] Rashid ad Din,[10] and Marco Polo (Sobti 2000: 286–299, 289). The city consisted of permanent and tent structures as well as stone monuments and a famous elaborate fountain, with two main quarters (Arab merchants and foreign ambassadors) and Chinese (craftsmen), 12 temples, 2 mosques, and one Christian church.

Karakorum was a city that combined Mongol, Chinese and Central Asian Moslem city-building concepts. The Khan's Palace of Worldly Peace was raised on a mound 4–5 meters high. It was 80 m. by 55 m. Surrounding the palace were smaller mounds of the same height and about one-half the size. A low circular mound, about 28 m. in diameter, stood east of this grouping and is thought to be the base for the Khan's great *ger*. Some believe the permanent buildings were made of granite and painted or gilded wood in a Chinese style. 'A notable feature of this whole complex of buildings were the raised platforms joined by raised pathways – a fashion which became common later in China under the Ming Dynasty' (Sobti 2000: 289). Throughout the city were other large palaces for court secretaries. The famous four gates of Karakorum demarcated their use: The Eastern gate had a bazaar for millet and grains, the western gate had a sheep and goat market, the southern gate featured a market for cows and carts, and the northern gate was the horse market. Suburban *ger* areas, not so different than those seen around modern Mongol cities, existed outside the low walls. The guardhouse, customs, and storage areas near the east gate indicate that the city was an important trading center. Because this capital was not the high-walled fortress of Europe and the Middle East, historians have questioned whether Karakorum was a city 'in the conventional sense' (Sobti 2000: 289). The point of Karakorum, however, was that it was a city 'in the Mongol sense.' We will find later Mongol cities also developing along such untraditional lines.

After the imperial capital moved out of Karakorum to Beijing, the city shrunk in both size and significance. With the end of Mongol rule in China, it regained its capital status and strategic importance. Since its fortifications were never substantial, it was utterly destroyed in 1380 by Ming Chinese troops. Because the Karakorum site was environmentally conducive for agriculture and sedentary life, as well as hallowed ground connected to the legacy of the Mongol Empire, Abdai Khan of the Khalkhas, who established the Tüshetü Khan line, in

1586 began construction there of the first lamasery in Mongolia, called Erdene Zuu '100 Treasures or Jewels' .[11] Stones from the old capital were incorporated into Erdene Zuu's 60–100 temples for 1000 monks over the next 300 years. During the early struggles of the Mongols with the Manchus, it was abandoned and vandalized, but the Manchu court assisted in restorations in 1760 and in 1808 (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 174–175). Sanjdorj, citing Manchu-period records, reported that in 1735 a military base was established on the Orkhon River in the vicinity of Erdene Zuu. Because traders settled there, a new trading settlement was built, which by 1746 was known as 'New Trade city of Orkhon' (*Orkhony shine khudaldaany khot*). This was closely connected with another trading town on the Orkhon at Khar Us and the city of Uliastai. (Sanjdorj 1980: 28).

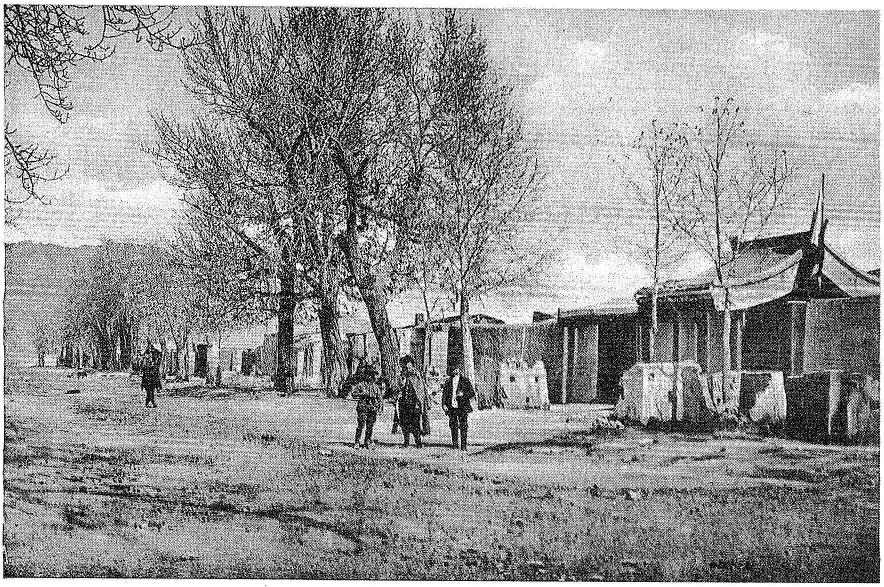
All but three temples and some tombs at Erdene Zuu were destroyed in the communist-led religious persecutions in the 1930s, and it became a great state farm. In 1965 the Government allowed Erdene Zuu's ruins to be reopened as a museum. The grand city never really was reconstituted, although in July 1994 the small agricultural center of Kharkhorin with new grain silos at one corner of the old site, was officially made a town by the Mongol Government (Sanders 1996: 113, 314). With democratization and religious freedom, in 1990 Eredene Zuu resumed its role as a functioning monastery. In recent years in order to attract tourism, the old Buddhist complex slowly is being renovated.

Khovd

A very old city in Mongolia, which has survived over the centuries is Khovd in the west of the country. It started many centuries ago as a small Chinese farming community on an oasis along a branch of the Silk Road. During the Mongolian Empire caravans bound for Karakorum would traverse Khovd. The Zungarian Western Mongol Khan Galdan Boshigt made it his base on the Buyant River in 1685, calling it Jargalant.[12] Mongol historian Sanjdorj wrote that Galdan established farms in the area (Sanjdorj 1980: 44) During the Manchu period it was renamed Khovd, after the nearby Khovd River, and it became a center for Mongolian and expanding Czarist Russian trade on the caravan route to the Silk road city of Urumchi. This trade incited Manchu Chinese concern about Russian penetration into Mongolia, so in 1762 after the total defeat of the Galdan and the Western Mongols, a walled fortress was established just outside Khovd. It was headed by the Manchu *amban*, who had responsibility with the Manchu governor-general at Uliastai for the 23 Altai Manchu-Russian border posts. The posts were at first under Manchu officers but later Mongol *taijis* commanded 30–40 Mongol soldiers per post. Western Mongols from the Tümed were imported into Khovd from Inner Mongolia as early as 1716 to farm and herd horses, but when the Manchu official agriculture farms were created in 1763, 400 Khalkha households were brought in to do the work.[13] The importance of Khovd as a military city during the Manchu period actually disguises its original role as an agricultural and trading center.

The ruins just north of the present city reveal a temple compound and Chinese graveyard. The 40,000 sq. meter 4m. high walls were 2 m. deep and 3 m. wide with three main gates. The Manchus planted trees on the main streets, some of which are still living more than 200 years later. Ten km. northwest of the city was an imperial monastery, Tügeemel Amarjuulagch or Shar Sum, built in the 1770s. It housed about 400 lamas, but this number decreased after it was destroyed in the Dungan Moslem attack on Khovd in the 1870s, and then rebuilt in a different location. Bawden reports that Shar Sum subsisted on the income from trading and caravanning (Bawden 1968: 86). It finally was totally destroyed during the persecutions of the 1930s (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 238–239). In 1761 one of the earliest Mongol schools had been founded there for twenty pupils to study Mongol, Manchu and law at the expense of the Mongol nobility (Bawden 1968: 86).

A very important battle led by Generals Magsarjav and Damdinsuren was fought in Khovd during Mongolia's struggle for independence from the Manchus



Main street of Khovd, 1910s. Source: Herman Consten, *Weideplätze der Mongolen: Im Reiche der Chalcha* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1920), vol. 2, p. 224.

in 1912, which is described by Bawden in his *The Modern History of Mongolia* (Bawden 1968: 196–199). We have first hand accounts of conditions in Khovd in the 1870s from the Russian explorers Pozdneev and Pevtsov, who noted that most of the 1000 population were Chinese traders. Around the towns were the *ger*s of poor Mongols who worked as day laborers.[14] Pevtsov wrote that there were fewer prostitutes than in other cities, because Khovd was the only town in Mongolia where the Chinese had brought their wives to live with them (Bawden 1968: 153). During the late Manchu period Khovd was a Chinese center including a fortress and trading area, with Mongols on the outskirts or working in the army fields with garrison soldiers. Its attractive streets are lined with poplar trees, planted by the Manchus giving it a special quality far different from typical Mongol cities. Today Khovd city, population 35,000, is the *aimag* center of the similarly named *aimag*. It has a thriving locally-grown fruit and vegetable market, and the main educational college in the west of the nation.

Other Cities

To the east in the birthplace of Chinggis Khan there is Avarga, which has been called the first capital of Mongolia. The old site is now underground and some 13 km. from today's village in central Mongolia's Khentii *aimag*. It is believed that Chinggis Khan sent out his army to Europe and Ögedei was proclaimed *khaan* from Avarga. On this site is the location of the monument erected to mark the 750th anniversary of the writing of the *Secret History of the Mongols*. One km. northeast of the marker are the city ruins, revealed by a Japanese-Mongolian joint expedition. Nine temples and palaces, attributed to Börte, Chinggis' head wife, have been identified. The area has good grass, medicinal mineral springs, and is on the river Kherlen, so its creation was a natural result of a favorable environment conducive to sedentary life and trade. Yet, because now this is not an active trading point near the border with Russia and perhaps geographically too wet, population in the region has gravitated to Öndörkhaan, the capital of the *aimag* (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 223).

In east Mongolia there is an even older city than Avarga – Kherlen Bar Khot, 120 km. west of Choibalsan City. The remaining small scale ruins are of a 12th century Khitan (Chinese) settlement, on the main road between Öndörkhaan and Choibalsan on a steppe close to the Kherlen River. Another Khitan city, also in ruins, is about 100 miles west of Ulaanbaatar towards Tsetserleg. Khara Baishing, 'Black Building,' was a walled city where two stupas reflect Buddhist influence in Mongolia two centuries before Chinggis Khan (Bawden 1968: 26).

The border city of Altan Bulag, across from Kyakhta in Russia, is a naturally developed trade settlement whose history is well documented. Bawden called it the only truly purely trade center town in Mongolia (Bawden 1968: 154). It began as the Chinese commercial center (*maimaicheng*) across from the Russian Fort Troitsk on the north side of the Russo-Mongol border in Buryatia. Fort Troitsk was named in honor of Prince Savva Raguzinskiy who signed the 1727 Russo-Manchurian Treaty of Kyakhta. The Mongol name at that time for Kyakhta was Deed Shivee. Altan Bulag was the 'trading suburb' (*sloboda*) for merchants dealing with Manchu China. They called the Russian city Ar Khiagt, after the Kyakht River on the border. The Manchu term for Altan Bulag was Övör Khiagt or Mongol Khiagt. Because of the commercial significance of Mongol Khiagt, a Manchu *amban* was installed and troops were garrisoned there after 1764. The border city supervised 47 *ger*-posts manned by Mongol soldiers with their families. The Mongol families tended to stay because they could engage in profitable trade with the Russians from the *maimaicheng* (Bawden 1968: 103–105). The settlement had a monastery built for its garrison soldiers, but was never a major monastic city. Mongol Khiagt was plundered by Mongol rebels during the Chingünjav revolts in 1756. When the city was retaken by the Manchus, the rebels were decapitated and their families sent into slavery.

The Russian city of Kyakhta played an important role in Mongolian history in the 20th century. In 1915 the Tripartite Treaty of Kyakhta among Republican China, Czarist Russia, and Autonomous Mongolia affirmed Mongolia's independent internal religious administration under the Bogd Gegen (Bogdo Gegen), but with a foreign policy controlled by the Republic of China. During the communist revolution, founding father Sükhbaatar smuggled his partisans chasing Baron Ungern Sternberg's forces into Russian Kyakhta. Within weeks he defeated the Chinese garrison and occupied Mongol Khiagt, making the settlement the first place 'liberated' by Mongol revolutionary forces on March 18, 1921 (Bawden 1968: 230–231). Thus, the little town has a special place in Mongol history, because Sükhbaatar's 400 soldiers routed 10,000 Chinese. He transferred the Provisional Government to Mongol Khiagt, so one could call the city the first capital of independent Mongolia in the modern era as well as the home city of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP). Finally, in 1924 the Russian city formally received the name of Kyakhta, and its commercial twin in Mongolia was called Altan Bulag (Sanders 1966: 114, 8). In 1931 Altan Bulag became the capital of Gazartarialan *aimag*, now Selenge; however, this status was transferred to the new political city of Sükhbaatar City in 1959. Today the Russian city of Kyakhta is a much larger one than the Mongol Altan Bulag. However, Altan Bulag likely will experience sizable growth, since a border free trade zone was established between the two cities in 2003, which already has brought great increase in vehicular transit traffic.

Another Mongol city which grew up in a natural manner because it sat on an important Manchu Chinese trade route is Sainshand ['Good Pond'], capital of Dornogov *aimag*. Its previous name was Dalaisainshand or Sainnossu. The city was a place where camel caravans could rest on the route between Beijing and Kalgan to Urga and up to Uliastai. It even had petrol stations for automobile traffic around 1920.[15] The original camel stop is in the 'old district' of Sainshand. The 'new district' is 2 km. north of the present rail station. Camel caravans were reported in the city as recently as the mid-1970s. Sainshand became the *aimag* center in 1961. It is expected this city will develop in the 21st century, because it is about 100 km. from some important new mineral finds in the Gobi and, being on the railroad to China, the minerals will be shipped out from there.

Monastic Cities

Cities that developed from Buddhist monastic sites in the 16th–19th centuries represent a significant number of Mongolian cities. However, this fact should not be exaggerated. It must be remembered that there were over 700 active monasteries in the pre-communist period. The vast majority of them did not result in the establishment of permanent towns, so the fact there was a monastery in a region did not necessarily mean it would lead to a sustainable urban settlement. A prominent example is Amarbayasgalant Khiid, the second most important monastery in Mongolia and one of the most beautiful. Built in 1737 under the auspices of the Manchu emperor and dedicated to the great Mongolian Buddhist sculptor Zanabazar, 10 of its 37 temples were destroyed in the 1930s. No permanent settlement has survived. Although the monastery resumed activities in the 1990s, it remains to be seen if a real sedentary community will develop around it. Most sites of monasteries were chosen because those sites were geographically suitable for permanent dwellings, and in fact may have been built on or next to sites known to have historically supported sedentary life. Erdene Zuu Monastery developed in this manner. The monastic sites which have survived to the present era generally were situated on good communication and trade routes. Some survived the destruction of their monasteries in the 1930s. Of course, the most prominent example of the monastic city is Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's national capital. But, before there is an in-depth discussion of the history of Ulaanbaatar, which is in many respects a unique Mongolian city, other urban centers which also have a mainly religious origin will be examined.

The rise of these monastic cities must be explained within the context of Mongol subordination to the Manchu Chinese government, which had a policy of supporting lamaist communities and restricting the movement of the Mongol tribes. Just prior to the Manchu conquest of China in 1634, there already were regulations in Inner Mongolia establishing territorial limits for the different Mongol tribes. Crossing boundaries was punished and movement regulated (Bawden 1968: 13). In 1691 when the Tüshetü Khan led the Khalkha Mongol princes and the Bogd Gegen at Dolonnuur to officially submit to the Manchu Kangxi (K'ang Hsi) Emperor, the practice began for the princes and Bogd Gegen to pay an annual tribute of nine whites (Jiu bai) or eight white horses and 1 white camel to the imperial court in Beijing (Tang 1959: 281).

Mongolia was then divided into four large provinces under hereditary princes confirmed in their positions by the Manchu court. These princes sometimes with the financial assistance of the Manchu emperors would create ecclesiastical estates around monasteries, often named after the princes who founded or supported them. The four great *aimag*s in the Manchu period were Tsetsen Khan *aimag,* Zasagtu Khan *aimag,* Sain Noyan Khan *aimag* (created last in 1728) and Tüshetü Khan *aimag.* Permanent centers of population including Mongol and Chinese agriculturists, artisans, and foreign traders began to grow up around the monasteries.

After Mongolian independence in 1921, the provinces received new names in 1923 and increased in number to five: Bogd Khan Uul (Ulaanbaatar or Tüshetü Khan), Khan Khentei Uul (Tsetsen Khan), Khan Taishir Uul (Zasagtu Khan), Chandman Uul (Zungaria – western areas), and Tsetserleg Mandal Uul (Sain Noyan Khan). During the communist period there were several realignments of *aimag* boundaries and city names. The major ones were in 1931, 1943, and in 1961. In the democratic era the *aimag*s were increased in number from 18 to 21 in 1993.

In Khentii *aimag* the present day capital was called Tsetsen-Khan *Khüree* (*Hüree*) (the 'enclosure' of the Tsetsen Khan during the post-Mongol Empire and Manchu periods) until 1921 when its name was changed to Khan Khentii Uul. In 1931 it assumed its present name meaning 'High King.' ('*Hüree*' or '*Khüree*' means enclosure, particularly as refers to a monastery (Sanders 1996: 194). Öndörkhaan was established in 1660 when the Tsetsen Khan built the Gundgavirian Khiid, which eventually housed 1000 lamas until they were driven out in the spring of 1938. Most of the monastic buildings were not destroyed until the 1950s when communist-era construction decimated the structures (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 219). Another monastery was established in the 18th century in what is now the heart of Öndörkhaan, where today's Ethnic Museum is housed. Although the Kherlen River flows through its south district, the city's greatest ecological advantage is that it is placed on one of the flattest and driest parts of Khentii, and is a natural gateway to eastern Mongolia's Dornod and Sükhbaatar *aimag*s from the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar (*Lonely Planet,* 1997: 219; Sanders 1996: 164). It is obvious that this geographical advantage is the main reason for the prosperity of the settlement.

Another early monastic city which is an *aimag* capital is Altai in Gobi Altai *aimag*. Zasagtu Khan Khüree was established by the Zasagtu Khan in western Mongolia and controlled regions of what is the Hami Prefecture in Xinjiang province China during the 17–18th centuries. Later the city was renamed Han-Taishirin Khüree from 1924–1931, when the *aimag* received the name of Han-Taishir Uul. When the *aimag*s were redrawn in 1931, it lost its capital status and was called Yosonbulag. In 1961 it re-emerged as the capital of Gobi Altai under the name of Altai (Sanders 1996: 8). In 2000 its population was approximately 17,500.

Tsetserleg, capital of Arkhangai *aimag*, was founded by the Sain Noyan Khan as Buyandelgeruulekh Khiid in 1586. It expanded in 1679 to a monastery complex with five temples and about 1000 lamas (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 152). During the Sain Noyan Uul period, it was called Zayaya Khüree. It changed its name and became the capital of the *aimag* in 1961. Tsetserleg's original monastery was not completely destroyed and now is a museum. There is a history of Arkhangai *aimag* published in Mongolian in 1973, but surprisingly this work does not discuss the development of Tsetserleg beyond a few comments (Regsuren and Baljinnyam 1973: 18).

Another monastic city that became an *aimag* capital is today's Bulgan in Bulgan *aimag*. It was established under the name Daichin Van Khüree (Dashchoinkhorlon Khiid) (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 182), and after the 1921 revolution became just Van Khüree. The monastery where 1000 monks lived was destroyed in 1937, but the city 3 km. to the southeast remained. The *aimag* was organized in 1938 when the center's name changed to Bulgan (Sanders 1996: 29). Mörön, *aimag* center of Khövsgol *aimag* with a population of around 28,000, grew up around Danzandarjaa *Khiid*, which a century ago had up to 2,000 monks[16]. The city grew along the Delgermörön (in Mongolian 'mörön' or 'mören' means 'river'). The large temple complex was destroyed in the 1930s, but now there is a new but growing monastery called *Möröngiin Khüree* west of the town center. Because of the mountainous terrain and cooler climate, local people tend to build wooden houses instead of living in *ger*. The city lies 100 km. south of Mongolia's largest lake, Lake Khövsgol, and its growth during the democratic period is directly tied to the increasing tourist trade to see the lake and the reindeer ('tsaatan') people who nomadize around it.

Ulaangom (originally called Ulaangomin Khüree – 'Red Sand Enclosure'), capital of Uvs *aimag*, also arose from a monastery. This religious institution was founded in 1757 by Lamaav, and grew to have 7 small temples with 2000 monks.

The central square of the city is 150 m. to the west of the monastery which was razed in the 1930s. The size of the original monastery and the sustainability of the city likely was due to its favorable location on the Gumbukh River near good hunting in the mountains and Lake Uvs, and to its proximity to Tuvan border trade (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 244).

Zuunmod, capital of Töv *aimag* only 46 km from Ulaanbaatar, originated as a monastic town. The great monastery of Manzshir is 5 km. northeast of the present city. Established in 1733, it had more than 20 temples and hundreds of monks before its destruction in 1932. It overlooks streams and forests. In the center of Zuunmod itself there is a stream with another smaller monastery called Dashichoinkhorin Khiid. This city was made the capital of Töv in 1965 and was developed by the communist government of the period as a satellite of Ulaanbaatar to prevent concentration of population in the national capital. With the democratic era, there has been a reverse migration back to the alluring Ulaanbaatar, because the town has few attractions to hold its citizenry.

Choibalsan, capital of Dornod *aimag*, was the monastic city of San Beisiin Khüree or Achit Beisiin Khüree. The *Lonely Planet* probably wrongly claims that it was originally a trading center on the caravan routes which became a town in the 19th Century. Likely the monastery of Danrag Danjalan Khiid supported by the San Beise, a Manchu-titled Mongol prince, was permanently established there around 1840, which brought the caravan and traders to the region on their way into Russia. The city then grew up north of the Kherlen River (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 213). After the communist revolution the city was renamed Bayantümen Khüree or just Bayantümen. The city acquired the name of Choibalsan after Mongolia's controversial 'Little Stalin' changed the name to his own in 1941.

Ikh Khüree(Ih Hüree)/Urga/Ulaanbaatar

Mongolia's most famous monastic city is the national capital of Ulaanbaatar. Everything about it is exceptional. As Bawden wrote in 1968 (and is equally true today) 'Ulan Bator is hardly typical of Mongolia as a whole . . . yet acts like a magnet, drawing in more and more people from the provinces . . . Yet if not typical of Mongolia's present, it is a significant portent for the future' (Bawden 1968: 9). Bawden was writing in the midst of the communist period when Ulaanbaatar was seen as an example of the eradication of the old Mongolia, and the epitome of the Marxist-Leninist view of moving Mongolia to by-pass capitalism into a society where industry would predominate over agriculture. Bawden himself saw Ulaanbaatar as an extension into the heart of Central Asia of Soviet-style town planning, because its monumental public buildings and concrete housing blocks 'bear no relation, architecturally or functionally, to the country's past' (Bawden 1968: 10). However, even in Bawden's time there were strong links to Ulaanbaatar's past and to other Mongol cities in the rings of permanent *ger* districts on the outskirts of the city.

Mongolian historians of Ulaanbaatar such as L. Dugersuren (1999), Ch. Dashdavaa (1994), and Kh. Perlee (1961) agree that the mobile city was founded in 1639, although they have found references to 1636, 1640, and even 1649. Sanjdorj asserts the foundations were laid in 1641 (Sanjdorj 1980: 22). The city's name is traced to the *örgöö* or temple *ger* of Tüshetü Khan Gombodorj's 5 year old son, Zanabazar, who was enthroned as the 1st Jebtsundamba Khutuktu or Bogd Gegen of the Khalkhas. However, it is very important to understand that the temple *ger* was a mobile one and originally placed at Shireet Chagaan Nuur in Lun district of Arkhangai *aimag*. The *ger* and residence of the Bogd Gegen was called Shar Bosiin Ord ('Yellow Cotton Palace'). It was nomadic for 139 years, moving from 25–40 times (depending on which source is referenced) (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 116, Sanders 1996: 206.. For example, Dugersuren, citing the *Erdene Erkh* writes that the *örgöö* from 1719 to 1735 moved 11 times – to Daagandel in 1719, Usan Surt in Selenge *aimag* in 1720, Tamir in Arhangai *aimag* in 1722, in Jargalant (Uliastai) in 1723, Ugtaal Jargalant in 1724, Khujirt, Jargarlant, and Burgalt in 1729, Sognogor in 1732, Terelj in 1733, and Uliastai in 1735. The next 43 years only 9 moves were recorded in the *Erdene Erkh* (Dugersuren 1999: 25–26).[17]

In 1706 the Ribogejigandanshadublin lamasery was created within the Bogd Khan's community. As a result, the name '*Örgöö*', which means 'big yurt' or 'residence' of a Mongolian prince (Sanders 1996: 72), was changed to Ikh Khüree or Khüree ('Great Monastery or Enclosure' because it belonged to the Bogd Khan). Finally, in 1778 the Bogd Khan's entourage permanently settled at the present site in the valley of the Selbe, a tributary of the Tuul River, and the settlement was named Ikh Khüree City. The fact that the word '*Khot*' (*Khota, Hot, Hota*) or 'City' was added to the name at this time seems to indicate that the Mongols themselves associated the term '*hot*' with a permanent site (although it appears that originally the word meant a group of *ger*), while the term 'khüree' does not indicate of itself a permanent site. In 1993 the Mongol government defined *Khot* as an urban settlement of 15,000 or more people (Sanders 1996: 72).

The city's first stone and brick temple buildings attached to the Gandantegchenlen (Tushitamahayanavipa) monastery were erected in 1834–38. The monastery was named after Dga'ldan, the Tibetan monastery of Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) sect of Tibetan Buddhism. It was closed in 1939, but re-opened in 1944 to be the only active monastery in the country during communist times (Sanders 1996: 75). The first two-story European-style house was built on Consul's Hill (*Konsulin Denj*) in 1863–1865, followed shortly by the Russian Orthodox Holy Trinity Church (Bawden 1968: 207).

Both Dugersuren and Sanjdorj discuss the rise of commercial activities, particularly as associated with Chinese (reportedly from Shansi Province (Sanjdorj 1980: 27) and Russian traders, around Ikh Khüree, even when it was a mobile site. Sanjdorj, using Manchu archival materials, claims there were over 1,000 Chinese in 1759 (Sanjdorj 1980: 34). He cites official documents from the registration of foreign shops in the early Mongolian People's Government period as noting that the oldest Chinese shop in Ulaanbaatar was built around 1725 (I-ho-lai) (Sanjdorj 1980: 28). Dugersuren ties this development of trade to the caravan routes opened up between Selenge or Kyakhta in Czarist Siberia and the Inner Mongolian city of Kalgan. He cites the trip in 1673 of Ivan Poroshinnikov with a party of 43 along this route, and claims the enclosure of the Bogd Khan was called *Khüree Usan Seert* in the early 1800s (Dugersuren 1999: 76).

An impetus to growth in business activities began after 1786 when representatives of the Tüshetü Khan and the Tsetsen Khan set up temples in Ikh Khüree City which gave the city a legitimacy as a national center. In the 19th century the other two *aimag*s and princes sent representatives, because there was a Manchu court administration under the *amban* there. Thereupon, traders were attracted by the growing number of customers for their goods. Chinese merchants had grown to 4000 by 1807, organized in households of ten called *arvan* with elected leaders (Sanjdorj 1980: 48).

There are several first hand accounts of Ikh Khüree City in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1883 the Russian explorer and general Przhevalskii wrote that the eastern part (Züün Khüree) of the city was inhabited exclusively by lamas under the Bogd Gegen, and he mentioned the names and locations of important temples. 'With the exception of the Khutuktu's palace and the main temples, the other living quarters in the lamas' district of Urga consist of little mud huts or felt tents. Both sorts are surrounded by high fences. The streets and alley ways between these erections are particularly dirty and narrow' [18]. Some miles to the east was the Chinese quarter for merchants called *Mai-mai-hota.* Sanjdorj reports the trading towns in Urga, like Khiagt, Uliastai, Orkhon and Khar Us, generally had the same physical appearance: 'streets were short and narrow, mud houses were low, but each had several gates and in most cases were enclosed by a square wall (Sanjdorj 1980: 47–48). Mongols lived in the special districts of the religious city and among the Chinese in the trade quarters. As the 19th century progressed, the Chinese sections expanded towards the religious. Bawden, quoting Nawaannamjil in Purevjav's *Urga Before the Revolution*[19], writes about Beggars' Hill where many beggars suffering from venereal diseases suffered from hunger and thirst. These different accounts not only allow us to glimpse the early life and development of the city, but also help us to see how its name changed.

Other names for Ikh Khüree City in Mongol language were Bogdin Khüree, Da Khüree (from 1818) and Khutuktuin (Hutagtin) Khüree. The Chinese traders gave it the name Kulun, which was derived from *Khüree*. In Tibetan, the official language of the lamaist church in Mongolia, the city was called Chonmo or Ribogejigandanshadublin *Khüree*, which is associated with the name of the founding monastery now called Gandan. In Russian and then into European languages the city was called Urga, a mispronunciation from the original *Örgöö*, or *Kuren* from *Khüree* (Sanders 1996: 207). Another explanation of the derivation of Urga according to Ossendowski is that *uurga* means herdsman's lasso pole. There was a right of *uurga* under which official travelers en route to their destination were protected. Ossendowski noted that the Buryat Mongols to the north called the city 'Capital Urga' either because it was the principal destination of trade caravans which crossed the steppes by this old method of right to travel or because the capital lies in a loop whose sides are formed by three mountain ridges along which the Tola River runs like a pole of the *uurga* (*History of MPR*: 813, note 98).

Eventually westerners came to accept the name of Urga, which is seen in the English accounts of William Rockhill and Franz August Larson among others. This name continued into the Autonomous and early revolutionary period of 1911–1924 when the capital was officially called Niislel *Khüree* (Capital Monastery), during the period of the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutuktu's reign as Mongolia's supreme political as well as religious leader. Finally, Urga became Ulaanbaatar Hot in 1924 at the death of this last Bogd Gegen, when the country was proclaimed the Mongolian People's Republic. The foreign spelling of Ulan Bator seems directly related to its Russian spelling. This Latin alphabet spelling, according to Sanders, was approved by the Mongol Post Office before the introduction of the Cyrillic Script. Sanders believes that the 'Red Hero' of the name can be explained in two ways. One is in honor of revolutionary founding father Sükhbaatar, but the other explanation is that it means 'Red Heroes' Town,' to honor the communist revolutionaries (Sanders 1996: 207).

In 1925 Ulaanbaatar's districts were named after the city's large monasteries – Gandan Züün *Khüree*, Dambadarjaalin, Dashchoinhorlin, and Shadavlin Khiid, and for the great lamasery outside Ulaanbaatar, Amgalanbaatar. These names persisted until 1965 when the growing city was divided into 10 urban boroughs within 4 large *rayons* (Soviet-inspired terms) named Ajilchin ('workers'), Nayramdal ('friendship'), Oktyabr ('October [Revolution]'), and Sükhbaatar (the revolutionary leader). In 1992 these boroughs (*duureg*) were renamed and increased to 12 to mostly reflect local geographical features, i.e. Baganuur, Bayangol, Bayanzurkh-Uul, Chingeltei-Uul, Gachuurt, Khan-Uul, Jargalant, Nalaikh, Songino-Khairhan, Sükhbaatar, and Tuul (Sanders 1996: 207–8).

Descriptions of early 20th Century communist Ulaanbaatar indicate that it still was a religious city with *ger* suburbs ringing the center. In 1933 it was given special autonomy and separated out from Töv *aimag*. The first industrial combine brought industry to the capital in 1934. All its products were animal by-products including shoes, leather goods, clothing, carpets, felt, yarn, textiles, and soap. In the 1960s and 1970s when industrialization was promoted by the Mongolian central government, newer industries developed on the outskirts of the city often near the Tuul River. Among them were building materials, vehicle repairs, brewing/distilling, woodworking, meat packing, small goods production, and dairy products. In the 1990s foreign investment from Japan and the US brought textile factories to comb, clean and/or produce cashmere garments and camel wool blankets or coat hairs for export. Ulaanbaatar's poor industrial infrastructure under communism was exposed almost immediately after the turn towards democracy and a free market economy, because most of the government-operated entities collapsed in bankruptcy, and few have been able to recover. To some degree there has been a small turnaround in industrial production especially in textiles, alcohol production, and milk products, but Ulaanbaatar is now a booming bureaucratic city with active telecommunications, banking, insurance, non-profit, and construction sectors, not an industrial center. A major deterrent has been its very out-dated power grid which cannot yet meet private household and small business demand, let alone significant industrial needs.

From the 1930s the Soviets began to build Russian-style massive apartment blocs to accommodate the growing population that spread from east to west. Japanese prisoners of war captured at the 1939 battle of Khalkhin Gol were impressed into construction gangs to build according to the Japanese neo-Colonial style many of the main public massive buildings, such as the old Opera House and the Stock Exchange building around Ulaanbaatar's central square named after Sükhbaatar. Chinese construction crews provided by Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) in the 1950s and 1960s built hotels and apartment complexes until rivalry between the Soviet Union and China stopped this program in Mongolia. In the democratic era, Western, particularly American style private houses, have been going up in Ulaanbaatar and in the ex-'*dacha*' communities within 20 km. of the capital after privatization of housing and land policies began. Ulaanbaatar has been experiencing fast growth and no slowing of this pattern is anticipated for the near future, even though the Mongolian Government does see the concentration of one-third of the nation's population in one urban site as a definite problem.

Military Cities

Uliastai

Mongolia's cities that developed from military fortifications or garrisoned sites are relatively few. One is very old and perhaps its site was in fact chosen many centuries ago for small trade and agricultural activities. This is Uliastai. However, its location in the Russian border area of Zavkhan *aimag*, surrounded by mountains on all sides, on the west bank of the Chigisei River, was developed during the Manchu period because it represented at that time the northern frontier for the Manchu Empire. Uliastai was the Manchu capital of Mongolia not Urga (Ulaanbaatar). With autonomy in 1911, the Mongols made their capital Urga, because the city was the seat of their highest religious leader, the Bogd Gegen. The Manchus had installed a military governor in Uliastai in 1733 to monitor all types of activities between the Russian government and traders and the Mongols nomadizing in the region. Soon it became the major military installation in the administration of 'Outer Mongolia.' It was to be sure a frontier outpost and its growth was more intimately tied to its military function, than the cities of Khovd and Ulaanbaatar, where Manchu high officials also sat to monitor Mongolian affairs. This is why it has been classified as a military city.

The importance of Uliastai as a military city came about due to the Manchu watch-post system with its corvee demands upon the Mongol tribes. Between 1727 and 1765, 82 frontier posts were established on the Manchu-Mongol border with Czarist Russia. Seventy of these were maintained and supported by the Mongols.[20] The twenty-three *sumun* or 'arrow' posts of the Altai posts were under the control of Khovd and Uliastai. 'The general purpose was to prevent communication between Russians and Mongols' (Bawden 1968: 104). It is noteworthy that of the 82 frontier posts, the vast majority did not become cities in Mongolia during the post-Manchu period. The 47 watch posts east and west of Mongol Khiagt, known as *ger* or tent posts, were manned by Mongol soldier families permanently settled, and Chinese were forbidden to live in these garrisons (*History of MPR*: 761, note 127). Perhaps the lack of a Chinese trade community alongside the military settlement prevented real cities from thriving. In any case, the paucity of modern cities which emerged from the Manchu military garrisons is another indication of just how difficult city-building was on Mongolia's forest-steppe.

A Manchu military governor-general (Jiangjun) with jurisdiction to Urianghai sat in Uliastai. All the Mongolian princes had to report to him. The Manchu imperial representatives in Urga and Khovd were subordinated to the Uliastai military governor. Because Uliastai was designated as the central place for Manchu military administration in Mongolia, the four great Manchu or Mongol *aimag* generals would send their seals and their own administrative officials to the city for three months at a time. This led the Mongol *aimag* princes to establish offices there. Such practices increased the bureaucratic and trade nature of Uliastai. The Peking Trade Agreement of February 1862 allowed Russian merchants to trade in Mongolia duty free and the 1881 St. Petersburg Treaty specified the frontier trade points open to Russians. Even though Russia was permitted to open consulates in Khovd and Uliastai in this Treaty, the consulates only opened in Uliastai in 1905 and in Khovd in 1911 (Tang 1959: 287).

Uliastai, because it was a military hub, played an important role in Mongolian pre-revolutionary military history. The Khalkha Khotogoit prince Chingünjav from the Urianghai region led an uprising against the Manchus in 1756 by trying to subvert the troops at Uliastai and calling on the soldiers manning the watch-posts and postal relay stations to desert. This revolt was put down by the Manchu court with Inner Mongolian troops. In 1900 the Mongol troops in the Uliastai garrison, poorly housed and paid, mutinied. The *amban* and other officials fled into the mountains, while their bodyguard and locals looted Chinese shops and farms. The Manchu and Mongol officials could not quell the mutiny, which petered out when the mutineers deserted and disappeared unpunished (Bawden 1968: 192–193). During the 1911 revolution the Manchu general and Manchu *amban* with their troops offered little resistance and surrendered quickly.

There are some intriguing references to Uliastai in the writings of the Taoist religious leader Chang Chun who wrote about his meetings with Chinggis Khan beginning in 1222 and his journey to Mongolia to the camp of the Great Khan's younger brother Temüge. During his travels he describes a colony of Chinese craftsmen in Uliastai (Ratchnevsky 2000: 200; Hoang 1990: 270). This appears to refute Bawden's statement: 'There is no evidence of Chinese traders in Mongolia before the Manchu conquest. . . . Chinese traders probably first entered Mongolia in the wake of the Manchu forces sent in 1696 to bring about the final defeat of Galdan' (Bawden 1968: 95). Sanjdorj reported that the Russian Mongolist Pozdneev [mistakenly] believed: 'There is no information in Mongolian-Chinese chronicles or travellers' diaries concerning the exact date when trade began at the Uliastai fort; that is, when the Chinese trading town was established in Uliastai. Even so, it would not be too far wrong to say that the Chinese trading town is as old as the city itself' (Sanjdorj 1980: 44). Sanjdorj claims that the Chinese trading town at Uliastai was built in the 1730s, when the forts of the Manchu army were established, but the Manchus did not give it official recognition until the mid-18th century. The Manchu Government tried to stop the growth of trade, but the Chinese population grew to be sizable, because Chinese traders were prohibited from going into the Khalkha countryside. Finally in 1757, under the military governor Tsevdenjav, Uliastai was confirmed as an official trading town by the Department of Outer Mongolian Affairs (Sanjdorj 1980: 45–47).

There are many extant travelers' accounts about the city, especially in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, so it is clear that there was an official fortress supported by a nearby trading center with Mongol-style *ger* encampments ringing the edges. Pevtsov visited Uliastai in 1879 and found it a town of about 1000, mostly Chinese merchants and craftsmen along dirty, muddy streets. They were making tent frames, wood utensils and grates for the Mongols. The Mongols were very poor, living in *ger*s and working as day labourers or beggars (Bawden 1968: 152).

In 1893 A. M. Pozdneyev provided a similar eye-witness account of the sad lot of the Mongols around Uliastai (Podzneyev 1971: 157–182). At that time there were 150 buildings in the town (Sambalkhundev 1973: 171–172). The *aimag* representatives were supposed to monitor the activities of their people and send vagrants back to their steppe homelands, but they did not carry out the policy (Bawden 1968: 153). Sambalkhundev reports that by 1910 the city had grown to 3000 inhabitants, 2000 of whom were Chinese. Chinese businesses had numbered 12 in 1870 and increased to 35 by 1900. In the 1860s and 1870s there were only 5 Russian businesses (Sambalkhundev 1973: 173). Geser Khan Monastery was established in the northeast of the Uliastai in 1786 and was utterly destroyed in the 1930s (Sambalkhundev 1973: 171).

During the Manchu period Uliastai had several names: Uliastai Military Khüree, Unart Road Military Khüree, and Treasury City (Sambalkhundev 1973: 174). Uliastai's name was changed in the communist period to Javhlant, when it became the capital of Han Taishir-Uul *aimag* until 1931 and subsequently the capital of Javhlant-Sharga *aimag* in 1941. It was reconstituted as Uliastai in 1961 (Sanders 1996: 208–209. 110–111). During the socialist period it never recaptured its importance as a trade depot. There is little to suggest its fate will be better in the democratic era.

Other military cities

A much newer military city in Mongolia is Choir, which was the former Soviet Army No. 10 base of 259 utilitarian concrete buildings, the largest created in Mongolia during the communist period. This was a 'town under national jurisdiction,' not open to the public before the Soviet withdrawal in 1992. The military installation was not marked on Mongolian maps, but it had a station on the railroad. With the departure of the Soviets, some Mongol families moved into the empty apartments, but many buildings remain empty. At first, the city was placed within Dornogov *aimag* (Bawden 1968: 43). However, the Mongol Government has hoped to spur growth by permitting it to formally secede from the *aimag* so it could be designated an autonomous municipality called Gov-Sumber. Choir has been declared a free trade zone, but development plans are proceeding very slowly.

The other major military city is Zamin Uud on the Mongolian-Chinese border in Dornogov *aimag*, where there is a railroad customs post. It lies across from the larger Chinese city of Erlian (Ereen in Mongol). With democratization, this border crossing has grown considerably. There are summer markets promoting cross-border trade and, with the general reorientation of import trade, particularly in foodstuffs and consumer products, from China, the Mongol city is thriving. The city really began when the railroad was constructed in the 1930s. It is near an old Manchu Chinese caravan border point. The railroad navigates the mountain passes and follows the several caravan dirt roads which predate it (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 259). In the 21st century Zamin Uud, population 7000, may become a boom town, if Mongolian Government plans for it to be the cornerstone of a new free trade, tourist, gambling, industrial, and commerce mecca are realized. In 2004 the Mongolian Government issued a tender announcement seeking investors to establish, develop and manage the Zamin Uud Free Economic Zone encompassing 900 hectares.

Political Cities

Just as military cities were artificially established, yet usually well chosen for their geographical locations influenced by security issues, political cities in Mongolia were deliberately created by the Mongolian Government, especially during the communist era to meet certain administrative needs. This type of city is particularly found in the Gobi areas of the country, where sustainability of towns is a major problem, requiring inflows of capital from the central government. If we consider the Gobi *aimag* centers, it is best first to look at a map of Mongolia during the communist period when the 5 major *aimag*s were redrawn into 18. Mongolian leaders, strongly influenced both by a history of war with China and the Soviet Union's rivalry with China over Mongolia, deliberately drew up their southern provinces along China's border in a basically north-south pattern with *aimag* capitals situated in the north of the *aimag*s for protection against Chinese invasion and for proximity to the national capital and the central Mongolian heartland steppes. No capitals were situated near the Chinese border. Some of the Gobi *aimag*s already had well-established cities by the 1930s and 1940s, that could fit the strategic and economic goals of the political leaders, e.g. Khovd, Altai and Sainshand. Other *aimag*s did not have a suitable city, so the communist central government ordered the creation of new capital settlements.

Examples of the new political cities are Mandalgov, population 11,000, capital of Dungobi *aimag*, established in 1942 out of 40 *ger*s. The city has no river, just dug wells, so it is flat and dusty. Although the *aimag* had 53 functioning monasteries in 1936, all were completely destroyed, and there is none on this city's site. Perhaps Mandalgov's location was chosen because it is not far from coal deposits.[21] Another political city is Dalanzadgad in Omnogov *aimag*. Again, it is not along any river nor any established caravan route/traditional road. Called the 'camel capital,' Dalanzadgad (population about 13,000) was made the *aimag* capital city in 1965. The city has benefited from the decision of the government in the late 1960s to develop Gobi tourist camps about 35 kms. from it. With the shift to the free market, these Gobi camps have proliferated and even have brought more tourism dollars to Dalanzadgad itself. As a result, its airport facilities have been considerably updated compared to other *aimag* capitals.

Bayanhongor City, the capital of the *aimag* with the same name, is a new city built in 1942 on the Tuin River in a relatively good geographical location. Its population in 2000 was 23,000. The city was an old Manchu postal relay (*ortoo*) site on the road west to Uliastai, but not a real town. Twenty kilometers to the east there was a great 10,000 lama monastic complex which has been totally destroyed. It became the *aimag* capital in 1963 (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 261–262.). In Sükhbaatar *aimag* Baruun Urt has been made the capital. There is no nearby river or major economic activity to sustain the population, and the site seems to have been chosen by authorities because it is in the center of the region. There was a large monastery, Erdenemandal Khiid, built in 1830 20 kms. from the present site. Although it grew to 7 major temples with 1000 monks, it was destroyed during the religious persecutions of the 1930s. The present small temple inside Baruun Urt is a democratic-era development. Baruun Urt became the *aimag* capital in 1965 (Sanders 1996: 22–3). In 1940 Sükhbaatar City in Selenge *aimag*, near the junction of the Selenge and Orkhon Rivers, was founded close to the border with the Soviet Union, as the customs and immigration control point for Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railroad. In 1959 it became the capital (Sanders 1996: 18, *Lonely Planet* 1997: 224).

Another political city which came into being because of a special circumstances is Ölgii, capital of the western *aimag* Bayan-Ölgii. The inhabitants of this region are mainly Muslim Kazaks, who started their migration into Mongolian territory in the 1840s. In 1938–1939 the communist central government opened cooperatives and forcibly banned arranged marriages and sale of Kazak women. The Muslims were given additional pastureland and administered under a Special Council of Kazakh National Minority Affairs (Sanders 1996: 188). In 1940 Bayan-Ölgii *aimag* was created from 7063 households with a total population of 33,300. At that time 40 per cent of the inhabitants were Kazakh. By 1990 Kazakhs made up 90 per cent of the *aimag*'s population. Ölgii on the Khovd River was made the capital in 1961 (*History of MPR* 344). Architecturally, the city has a Turkic rather than monolithic Russian-feel with an active bazaar in the city center. In 1990 Ölgii had 30,000 people. It lost population with the independence of Kazakhstan in the early 1990s (population fell to 22,000) (Sanders 1996: 163; Baatar 2002: 96). However, some thousands of disgruntled immigrants have returned home to Bayan-Ölgii *aimag*. It is thought that the *aimag* capital city could further develop as Mongolia's link to Central Asia, as border trade with Kazakstan continues to grow.

Another politically designed settlement dating from the 1964, which was created to be a tourist destination, is Terelj in Töv *aimag*. It now has been incorporated into Gorkhi-Terelj National Park (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 163). Originally only open in the summer, a more permanent though relatively new settlement has developed to accommodate tourists and provide consumer goods for the nomadic families that graze within the Park. Its growth is spurred by the increase in population around nearby Ulaanbaatar.

Industrial Cities

Mongolia's other type of modern city is the industrial town. These cities were to take Mongolia into the modern world of industrialization, and are a particular feature of Mongolian political thinking of the 1960s, when the government under Premier Yu. Tsedenbal sought to create industrial towns in the Soviet-style. Many were placed in the north of the country near major mineral or agricultural areas and on the road north to Siberia, where the goods could be moved west to the Russian heartland and to the socialist (COMECON) markets. Since the fall of the subsidized command economy and the weakening of economic ties to Russia, these industrial cities have been particularly hard hit. In this category of cities is Tosontsengel, the 2nd largest city in Zavkhan *aimag*, which is the center of Mongolia's timber industry. It was given town status in 1965 (Sanders 1996: 194).

Other industrial towns were connected to mining activities initiated by the Soviets. Among these are Nalaikh, developed in the 1950s and manned by Kazak

Mongols from Bayan Ölgii *aimag* who were brought in to work the coal mines. A large Soviet military airport was constructed there too, so a Mongol town grew up in the vicinity. When the Russian mining supervisors and air force personnel left in 1990, the mines officially closed. The airport is idle and the city is almost dead. Now Nalaikh is part of the Ulaanbaatar Autonomous Municipality, and it is reported in the press that dangerous, private mining by individuals still takes place in the old shafts.

Baganuur City, founded in 1978 to mine coal, is another new city under the Ulaanbaatar Autonomous Municipality. Around the site there had been a *ger* village called Gun Galant Nuur on a nearby lake. The Soviets built their largest military base near Baganuur City. It was abandoned in 1992. Baganuur's coal mines are not operating efficiently, but since it supplies coal for the Ulaanbaatar power system, the state mines continue to function (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 168–169, 136). Other mining towns include Mardai, built by Soviet workers in Dornod *aimag* because an uranium mine was opened (sometimes called by the name of the mining company 'Erdes') and Sharin Gol in Selenge *aimag*, founded in the 1960s to mine lignite coal (Sanders 1996: 124, 181). However, the most famous examples of Industrial Cities are Erdenet and Darkhan.

Erdenet and Darkhan

Erdenet, population of 74,000, now the capital of Orkhon *aimag* since 1994, was founded in 1976 as a 'town under national jurisdiction,' constructed north of the Tsagaan Chuluut River. It was built several km. from the huge copper and molybdenumun Soviet-Mongol joint venture mine, which employs about 8,000. Because of the multi-million value of the mine's products, the city's infrastructure including hotels, are among the nation's best. A spur of the north-south railway from Ulaanbaatar was built in 1977 to accommodate movement of the minerals. Mongol workers were imported into the city to work the mines, and other industries producing foodstuffs and carpets followed (Sanders 1996: 69). Erdenet grew quickly to be Mongolia's third largest city. There was and still is a significant Russian community associated with the mine and doing commerce. With democratization and declining world copper prices, it has lost some population, but remains a vital force. When the Erdenet joint venture is eventually privatized, the fate of the copper mining operation will determine the future of the city.

The other major industrial city is Darkhan ('Blacksmith'), which used to be the second largest Mongolian city, now in the autonomous municipality of Darkhan-Uul. Located near coal deposits which were used as its energy source, Darkhan was designed and financed by the Russians in 1961 in two sections, with a satellite town and a northern industrial center (Sanders 1996: 201). Today, there are four sections: the old north industrial zone and another one to the south, the old town near the train station, and a new region south of the old town (*Lonely Planet* 1997: 201–201). The city was a center for animal by-product processing – especially leather goods and rugs, cement and flour factories. With the end of the subsidized state factory system, Darkhan has suffered many bankruptcies. Its population in the socialist period approached 100,000, but in 2000 it had fallen to only 72,000. Unless Mongolia can find ways to revitalize and re-capitalize its light-industrial sector, the future of 'industrial' cities such as Darkhan, is not bright. However, new industrial towns should emerge from rapidly growing mineral exploration, but if these are not associated with favorable ecological sites, they will thrive only as long as the mineral deposits last.

Conclusions: The Future of City Building in Mongolia

Humphrey believes that a migration-based economy is not incompatible with urbanization, because there are examples of nomadic communities with intensive cultural and economic links to cities (Humphrey 1999: 210). To her 'urbanism in rural areas is to a great extent a function of economic opportunities in district centers, distance from the city, and the roads, railways and other communications that happen to link a given district with a metropolis' (Humphrey 1999: 216). Sedentarization of herders does seem connected to pasture degradation, but the creation of populated villages can be combined with mobile herds and lifestyle. If her research in Central Asia and Mongolia is at all correct, this would mean that Mongolia does not have to make the stark choice between the traditional economy of nomadism and sedentary modernization.

This is also the viewpoint of Salzman in his important study, *When Nomads Settle.* He proposes a model of 'adaptation and response' to explain how people can move back and forth between nomadism and sedentarization. This model stresses options available as responses to 'environmental, demographic, and external political and economic processes' (Salzman 1980: 12). He rejects the notion that sedentarization is irreversible and absolute.

In other regions of the world, nomadic life retreated and disappeared as man learned to conquer the environment and build settlements around agriculture or trade. The Mongolian climate and environment are at the edge of man's ability to easily dominate nature. Nomadic life is a carefully honed adjustment over centuries to utilize in a cost-efficient, balanced manner a difficult environment. Mongol nomads do not conquer nature, they accommodate themselves to its rigors and for the most part emerge successful. Progress in the modern world is not measured in the same way; progress and civilization, historically, have been products of agricultural success and the development of cities. The Mongolian plateau always has been the site of struggles between nomads and settled communities, and the nomads usually won. In this new 21st century of globalization and mass media, Mongolia still is conducting this vast and very interesting struggle, experimenting with development policies in a public way before the eyes of its own citizenry and the world.

In the 2nd half of the 20th Century scholars devoted to Mongolian studies could not help but see urbanization of the populace, no matter how small-scale, as 'an indication of the decline of the self-sufficient steppe-society' (Bawden 1968: 154). One of Mongolia's best historians, Charles Bawden, writing in 1968, opined: 'If nowadays the Mongols are to integrate themselves in a world whose increasingly uniform culture demands factories, farms and cities, then nomadism will have to disappear. If the Mongols were to stand aside from this process they would finish up as curiosities, survivals in a reservation' (Bawden 1968: 387). He was looking at Mongolia in the midst of the communist industrialization and crop agriculture promotion era, when the Government, urged on by its Soviet mentors, was seeking a modern civilization with industry, schools, radio and television – all of the culture of a developed socialist society, and believed all of that was incompatible with a transhumant population dependent on extensive herding techniques. During that period, Mongols residing in settlements increased from a minority to a sizable majority of the population. Even nomadic specialists such as Salzman are pessimistic about the survival of the nomadic lifestyle:

> The 'modern' culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has valued urban rather than rural life, education rather than experience, refinement rather than natural qualities, consumption rather than production, national rather than local identity, and leisure rather than labor. In the modernist vision, spread effectively and widely through schools and the mass media (Salzman 1996), rural producers, such as pastoralists out on the range with their animals, are deemed marginal and backward. With the cultural value of pastoralism so denigrated, young people are discouraged from taking it up (Murru Corriga 1990; Edelsward 1996; MacDougall 1992), and without recruitment, pastoralism dies (Salzman 2004: 15–16).

Yet, with the fall of communism and the collapse of the command economy, Mongolia already has modernized far beyond the imagination of most communist planners. Mongols in large numbers were forced to leave the planned cities and return to the countryside to support themselves as livestock herders, bringing with them satellite dishes and cell phones to connect them to the market and the world. Does this mean the end of nomadism in favor of sedentarization; or is this going to lead to a new form of 'smarter nomadism?' What impact will such trends have on the future of Mongolian cities?

One conclusion that has arisen from this present analysis of Mongolian cities is that nomadic Mongolia does in fact have a long and varied history of resilient city formation. The origin of these permanent settlements is sometimes different from the world's standard pattern of originating from settled agriculture and/or being at a trade crosspoint. Even so, Mongolia does have a number of cities that arose in this traditional way and survived into the modern era. Of the analyzed 32 Mongolian cities considered in this research, approximately 19 per cent (6 cities) followed this traditional agriculture and trade crossroads city-building model.

However, this pattern was not the most fertile ground for Mongolian city building, because the climatic and geographical environment on the Mongol plateau did not permit many places with these conditions. Cities in Mongolia, to a greater extent than in most countries, have for centuries been 'planned.' Whether established consciously to promote religion (28 per cent or 9 of the cities), for military protection (12 per cent or 4 cities), for political reasons (19 per cent or 6 cities), or as industrial cities (22 per cent or 7 cities), Mongolian settled communities had to be planned in order for the unfavorable geographical conditions to be overcome to achieve sustainability. For a huge country the size of Mongolia to have only about thirty communities which are towns, and less than ten real cities is a vivid indication of the difficulties of supporting and sustaining sedentary life. In fact, one of the results of the first decade of free markets was the consolidation of the population into fewer municipalities, because the unduly expensive, nearly bankrupt, central government-funded economic base of the political and industrial cities was exposed.

As Mongolia goes forward into the 21st Century, it finds itself with a rapidly expanding capital in Ulaanbaatar, which is sucking in urbanized population from the nation's less successful cities. This phenomenon produces a relatively modern technically-oriented capital populace of bureaucrats and administrators with little industrial base and almost no agricultural resources. It is sustained on foreign donor aid, a lively, often underground private consumer economy, and a weak tax base. Reprocessing factories and light industries are less important employers. The price for Ulaanbaatar's success today is as high or higher than the cost for maintaining 19th Century Urga's (Ulaanbaatar) huge ecclesiastical establishment. In the Manchu period, settled communities including Urga were sustained only through accumulating massive debts to Chinese traders. In the communist era, Soviet aid sustained and grew urbanism, leaving a huge and still unpaid foreign debt. Today's democratic era finds the western foreign donors, by supporting 30 per cent of the national budget via grants and assistance loans worth over $1 billion in the 1990s, play the role of the Chinese traders in keeping Mongolia's urban economy afloat. All of this fiscal debt is a terrible price to pay to maintain a sedentary lifestyle.

The rest of Mongolia, the other 50 per cent of the people spread among the small and generally not thriving villages, or living as migratory or semi-migratory herders, have a lifestyle more in common with the distant past than with modern Ulaanbaatar. Some of the communist-era planned cities will surely die or severely contract, because the economic and communications base in today's democratic environment cannot continue to artificially support them. This already is happening in Darkhan and Choibalsan. Their slow death has not come with destruction, like the majority of the settlements surrounding monasteries in the religious purges of the 1930s. Their dying is reflected, rather, in the scores of abandoned buildings in all the cities except for the Ulaanbaatar region.

To respond to the growing urban crisis in the 1980s, the Mongolian communist government created a policy called the Northern Territorial Production Complex, an industrial and agricultural development region established in northern Mongolia based on similar models in the USSR. This policy has been superseded by Economic Cooperation Zones (Sanders 1996: 156). These Economic Cooperation Zones, created in the mid-1990s, promote medium-term economic development, so that these outlying zones will be less dependent on Ulaanbaatar and the central region where population, industry and infrastructure now are concentrated. The six Zones are Bayan Ölgii, Central, GovAltai, Överhangai, Sükhbaatar, and Ulaanbaatar. Each zone has a cooperation office headed by a Zonal Cooperation Secretary (Sanders 1996: 24); however, this plan to date has not worked very well.

Nevertheless, Mongolia's economic development in this new free market era may still spur the revitalization of cities, particularly the towns around significant mineral deposits or at border crossings to the north and south. Mongolian economic policymakers have revised the plan for Economic Cooperation Zones by promoting border trade zones, beginning in the north with Altan Bulag in Selenge *aimag* and progressing in 2004 to the even more active Chinese border region at Zamin Uud. Such free trade border zones should assist city development and diversification. The Mongolian Government also is encouraging economic development along the Millenium Road in the center of the country, as a way to connect the population-losing *aimag* centers with the capital city in an east-west direction.

Will such development planning be successful? One major determinant is for Mongol administrations to follow a steady economic development policy regardless of political party or Prime Minister. Frankly, this goal based on the first decade of democracy in Mongolia is probably not realistic. Another major factor influencing success will be whether or not policymakers obtain foreign donor community agreement to invest large sums of money to artificially support the cities that are not doing well, especially the dying industrial and political cities. Subsidies are particularly needed in the politically designed Gobi *aimags*' centers, whose geographical position so far north cuts them off from the benefits of the now lucrative China trade, and encourages the trend of bunching Mongolia's population in the center of the country with large border regions relatively uninhabited. Such a policy also is proving environmentally disastrous and full of negative strategic security implications.

The final major input is how Mongolia's new land ownership policies will proceed. With the implementation of the Law on the Privatization of Land in May 2003 a Fair Land Privatization Movement has sprung up (Liberty Center 2003). Issues such as how is farmland to be divided, whether or not rural citizens can choose land for ownership as freely as urban citizens, and should family size influence size of land ownership all impact on the growth of sedentarization. As presently constituted, the Land Law certainly will promote further the already established pattern of explosive growth of suburbs around Ulaanbaatar. Whether it will be helpful in reviving outlying communities deeper in the countryside, at the expense of public land for nomadizing, is not clear. However, wise land policies could perhaps assist city leaders to discourage over-grazing around rural *aimag* centers, an increasingly troublesome trend since the dismantlement of the command economy.

City development and sustainability problems will be an important element in Mongolia's future economic strategy. Ignoring the geographical and climatic realities to artificially force urbanization is a past strategy that will only lead to failure. Mongolia's nomadic lifestyle, developed over centuries to accommodate to natural conditions, has proven to be flexible and resilient. If city planners and Mongolian authorities proceed from this positive view of the nomadic economy, instead of from a negative desire to supplant all vestiges of nomadism in the name of progress, Mongolia has a better chance of successfully integrating rural, town, and city life, and spreading prosperity to all segments of the population in all regions.

Notes

1 The topics considered by this organization are globalization and challenges of civilization development in XXI century, Problems of Central Asian civilizations, Issues on development of different kinds of nomads in network of the world civilization in XXI century.

2 Janzen, Joerg and Enkhtsetseg, Bat-Ochir, 'Rural-Urban Migration of Pastoral Nomads in Mongolia,' in Dialogue among Civilizations: Interaction between Nomadic and Other Cultures of Central Asia, International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations UNESCO, Bembisan Publishing, Ulaanbaatar, 2001, pp. 234–237. They call it the 'quick march to the end or death of nomadism.'

3 Of course, Humphrey does not mention that all the nomadic areas she studied were exposed to communist (either Soviet or Chinese) settlement policies, so whether this is a universal dynamic or a regional one is not established.

4 Two-thirds are mobile and the remaining third have permanent plus mobile dwellings.

5 See Sanjdorj's Manchu Chinese Colonial Rule in Northern Mongolia for more details.

6 Sobti, Manu P., 'Urban Traditions and City-Building Among the Central Asian Nomads,' Dialogue Among Civilizations, pg. 289 says that Chinggis used it as a base camp military center and an arsenal.

7 Baabar, B, History of Mongolia, Cambridge, 1999, pg. 32 quotes Yelu Chucai (Yelu Chutsai), 'A great nation has to have a great capital.'

8 The Secret History states that Ögedei made camp there, para 273 (25v) in Cleaves. Also refer to Dambyn Bazargur and Dambyn Enkhbayar, Chinggis Khan Atlas, Ulaanbaatar, 1997.

9 Jackson, Peter and Morgan, David, 'The Mission of Friar William of Rubruk, His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke 1253–1255' in Spuler, Bertold, History of the Mongols, Dorset Press, New York, 1972, pp. 108–9.

10 Spuler, pp. 57–59 citing Verkhovsky's 1960 translation.

11 For a general work on the history of Erdene Zuu see Sh. Sukhbat, Erdene Zuu Khiidiin Tüükh, 1966.

12 Bawden, pg. 94, which is why Bawden claims Khovd began as a military garrison. Blunden , Jane, Mongolia The Bradt Travel Guide, United Kingdom, 2004, pg. 334 claims the city was founded in 1731 as a Manchu outpost but gives no reference.

13 See Bawden, pg. 104 for the organization of the posts, and pg. 109 on the farms. Also Tümüriin Namjim, The Economy of Mongolia From Traditional Times to the Present, ed. William Rozycki, Occasional Paper 22 of The Mongolia Society, Bloomington, IN, 2000, pg. 10 refers to barley, wheat, and millet cultivation.

14 Bawden, pg. 153. See note 13a quoting Pevtsov in M.W. Pewzow, Wo man mit Ziegeltee Bezahlt, Leipsig, 1953, pg. 327.

15 Campi, Alicia, The Political Relationship Between the United States and Outer Mongolia, 1915–1927: The Kalgan Consular Records, Indiana, 1988 quoting U.S. Consul Samuel Sokobin, pg. 151.

16 Sanders, pg. 29 and History of the Mongolian People's Republic, trans. William A. Brown and Urgunge Onon, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1976, pg. 761 note 124.

17 Dugersuren, pp. 25–26. Sanders in pp. 206–208 transliterates some of Dugersuren's names, but there appears to be some variance.

18 Bawden, pg. 12 translating from the German N.M. Prshewalski, In das Land der wilden Kamele, Leipzig, 1954, pg. 26.

19 Bawden, pg. 155 citing S. Purevjav, Khuv'sgalyn Omnokh Ikh Khüree, Ulan Bator, 1961, pp. 106–7.

20 Sanders, pg. 103. B. Sambalkundev's work on the history of Zavkhan aimag discusses the location of the posts in detail in Zavhan Aimgiin Tüükhin Toim, Ulaanbaatar, 1973, pp. 12–13. He provides a good early history of the city on pp.169–178.

21 Campi (1988) notes that U.S. Consul Samuel Sokobin in his writings mentions a border crossing town of Udde which likely lay in the same region.

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3

Municipalization and Ethnopolitics in Inner Mongolia

Uradyn E. Bulag

Cities were not unknown on the Mongolian steppe despite a nomadic tradition (cf. Gaubatz 1996). As Mongols conquered more land and people, they either brought in craftsmen to build cities or moved out to conquered land and ruled from the cities there. Karakorum, once one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world, but now in ruins in the heart of Mongolia, was the capital of the Mongol empire. Beijing, a major city and capital of China, was largely established by the Mongols. However, as Mongols were driven out of China in the late 14th century and never regained their former strength, they swiftly reverted to their traditional nomadic lifestyle and inter-tribal wars, far removed from urban life. Cities only survived in the Mongols' historical memories in the form of ruins, known as *balgas*, reminding them for instance of Dadu (Beijing), known as Khan Balygh, or Balac, as recorded in Marco Polo's travel book, a memory perhaps comparable to Samuel T. Coleridge's imagining of Xanadu, where his Khubilai Khan built his 'stately pleasure dome'.

The Mongols' second, and this time thorough conversion to Tibetan Buddhism in the 16th–17th centuries transformed them from world-conquerors to world-renouncers, and much of their interest and capital was devoted to monastery-building in Mongolia and Tibet. Monasteries thus studded the otherwise sparsely populated Mongolian plateau, which then also served as market centers, where Chinese and Muslim merchants, allowed in by the Qing authorities, settled and built shops, creating a vast merchant empire exploiting Mongols. Over the centuries, Hüree or Urga (today's Ulaanbaatar) in Outer Mongolia and Hohhot in Inner Mongolia developed into the two largest merchant cities on the Mongolian steppe.

With the influx of Chinese immigrants towards the end of the 19th century to Mongol monastic centers, there was an increasing cultural inward development on the part of Mongols, who believed that cities were necessary evils, imperative for obtaining commodities, but not suitable for Mongol residences. Cities thus became culturally Chinese, as trading became known as *hudaldaa*, 'cheating' in Mongolian, or in the Chinese loanword, *maimai*, which means 'buying and selling', thus potentially displacing the original term *ariljaa*, making trading something alien to the very ethic of Mongolness.

During the 20th century, especially since 1949, Mongols in Inner Mongolia began to flow into cities in relatively large numbers as party, government, and educational personnel. Cities were developed from monastic centers or market towns to administrative centers of leagues and banners, but a few were newly developed industrial towns planned by the Chinese government and built by workers transferred from outside Inner Mongolia. Since the 1970s yet another form of urbanization was introduced, that of municipalization. Until 1976 the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region had only three prefectural-level municipalities, Hohhot, Baotou and Wuhai. Now there are four additional ones: Chifeng established in 1983, Tongliao in 1999, Ordos in 2001 and Hülünbuir in 2002.[1] Unlike the former three municipalities, which developed out of urban centers, the latter four came from Mongolian leagues (the Mongolian administrative name for prefecture), substituting municipalities for leagues. What is also striking is the concurrent dropping of Mongolian league names and replacing them with Chinese names as in the cases of Chifeng and Tongliao municipalities, their predecessors being Jo'uda and Jirim leagues. Although Ordos is a Mongolian word, the original league name was Yekeju. Only Hülünbuir League retains its original name when municipalized.

This chapter examines this interesting 'municipalization' process cum rectification of names, which seeks to present a rapidly modernizing image of Inner Mongolia. What is unique about this transformation is that it differs from the classical urban development pattern whereby a relatively small town grows in size through gobbling up surrounding rural areas, as in the cases of Hohhot, Baotou, and Wuhai. A more comparable model can perhaps be found in the new phenomenon whereby localities all over China aspire to 'elevate' by rectification of names. The magic of the term *chengshi* (city or municipality) or any term that elevates one on the administrative scale is sought by all and sundry. I argue that, in the case of the four new municipalities noted above, it can best be comprehended in the context of Inner Mongolian ethnopolitics, that is, China's mode of administrating non-Chinese minorities, accompanied by China's Confucian practice of rectification of names, in the process of China's ever-changing political economy. In exploring this question, I will first analyze the Chinese administrative practices regarding non-Chinese minorities, including cultural practices of naming to overcome ethnic autonomy, and then expound on how the regional disparity rendered by Deng Xiaoping's development policy engendered a new passionate desire for development on the part of both frontier Chinese and Mongols. Such a modernity is what I will call alter/native modernity, that is, not just an alternative Chinese modernity, but one which hinges on altering the native Mongol cultural and political institutions and properties.

The Politics of Administrative Division and Multinationalism

Western theorists of ethnicity and nationalism have largely ignored administrative naming as an important component in maintaining ethnic relations. So too, probably, have students of demography and urbanization. Nor have those who have examined China's ethnicity paid much attention to the administration of non-Chinese peoples.[2] The conventional understanding of literati officials as China's quintessential bureaucrats has probably prevented inquiries into other forms of administrative systems, especially concerning those found in non-Chinese ethnic areas in China. It is often assumed that China's Confucian culture invariably assimilated the barbarians who resided within their political terrain. However, the fact remains that until 1884, when the Qing dynasty established Xinjiang province, the 'Chinese' bureaucracy did not penetrate into about half of today's non-Chinese-inhabited territories. I submit that one of the most important mechanisms in maintaining the boundary between Chinese and non-Chinese has been through separate administration, based on differences in language, economy, geography, or any other tangible factors. I also suggest that the municipalization of the Mongol league system, marking the elimination of leagues, reflects the tension between China's multinational reality and the Confucian-cum-nationalist Chinese state's desire for cultural and administrative homogeneity.

Mongols exerted a far-reaching impact on the Chinese administrative system, in terms of governing the ruling people and non-Chinese peoples. On the one hand, Mongols instituted the *xingsheng* or 'province' system, which later came to be understood as a unique 'Chinese' local administrative institution. Mongol and their loyal non-Chinese officials, known as *darugachi*, were appointed by the Mongol Great Khans (emperors) to serve in various localities (cf. Endicott-West 1989; Li 1997). As a highly centralized polity, the Yuan dynasty redefined the relationship between the center and the periphery, eliminating the latter's potential in challenging the court in the so-called tributary relationship. On the other hand, during the Yuan period, non-Chinese peoples in today's southwest and northwest were granted wide autonomy, their native chieftains (*tu guan*) permitted to rule their domains hereditarily (Gao 1999; Bai 1999). Both were apparently innovations.[3] One may argue that such administrative separation was not so much a Mongol altruism in building a multicultural empire as a Mongol strategy to liberate the underdogs despised by the Chinese. During the Mongol Yuan many of the predecessors of today's non-Chinese minorities were organized as legitimate components of the Mongol empire,[4] and their leaders were made hereditary.

The establishment of the dual administrative system, separating the Chinese from other peoples, has profound implications, as it informs the dynamics of later Mongolian and Chinese histories. Although the *tusi* system was further institutionalized during the Ming, it was also the Ming that started to dismantle it under the program called *gaitu guiliu*, that is, replacing hereditary native chiefs with centrally appointed civil service officials. This attempt prompted strong resistance from non-Chinese peoples who came under Chinese rule. The Qing dynasty, on the other hand, building on the Mongol system, instituted a more elaborate system that recognized native autonomy, although that recognition hinged on their support for the Manchu in ruling China. Mongols in various communities were allowed to keep their khanates (*aimag*) as in Outer Mongolia, or organized under a league (*chuulgan*) and banner (*hoshuu*) system as in Inner Mongolia, whereby the hereditary Chinggisid princes enjoyed great autonomy in administering their leagues or banners.

It is important to note that the Mongol-derived administrative system remained an important device in keeping non-Chinese loyal to the imperial center. The greatest source of dissatisfaction and rebellion on the part of non-Chinese people came often when their relative autonomy was revoked and they were subjected to direct Chinese-style administration. What is interesting is that as the Mongols attained a non-ruling minority status under the Manchus, administered in the league and banner system, the provincial system that they had introduced during the Yuan period became distinctly 'Chinese' and non-Mongol in their own eyes. Mongols saw the establishment of provinces in the territories of Inner Mongolia in 1928 as an imposition of Chinese regular administration, depriving Mongols of their autonomy. Defending leagues and banners, both in form and substance, became the very source and content of modern Mongolian nationalism in Inner Mongolia.

Let me elaborate this point further. Modern Mongolian nationalism has been punctuated by a response to the loss of Inner Mongolia as an autonomous territorial administrative zone. Chinese nationalism, similarly, set the unification of all territories under a uniform provincial administration as its ultimate goal. By 1928, as soon as Jiang Jieshi conquered north China and set up central government rule under the Guomindang (the nationalist party), he placed all frontier territories under newly created provinces, such as Rehe, Chahar, Suiyuan, Ningxia, Qinghai, etc., all except Outer Mongolia and central Tibet, which were beyond Chinese control. This attempt to impose administrative unity was soon followed by revoking the solemn promise of the union of five nationalities (the foundational pact of a multinational Republic of China promised by Sun Zhongshan), thereby rendering Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans and Muslims as simply branches of the Han-centered Chinese nation, as explicitly specified in Jiang's *China's Destiny*, his testament and a text that has sometimes been seen as a Chinese *Mein Kampf*.

The Chinese Communist Party, for its part, influenced by Leninist doctrine and perhaps obligated by the terms of the alliances it had established with some minorities in order to oppose the Guomindang, as well as by the sheer demand for autonomy on the part of some minorities, instituted what is called 'regional national autonomy' after 1949, modeled on Inner Mongolia, the first autonomous region, established in May 1947. In fact, in earlier decades, the CCP set up independent Soviet republics for themselves, and autonomies for non-Chinese minorities, thus incurring the wrath of the Chinese nationalists, who called them bandits or traitors. This is an important topic in its own right, but here I only want to point out that because of the Mongols' strong aversion to the very term *sheng* or province, the territory under the control of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Government established in May 1947 came to be called 'Autonomous Region' (*zizhi qu*) rather than 'autonomous province' (*zizhi sheng*) after 1949.[5] Within the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, the local administrative divisions included league (prefecture, *aimag* in Mongolian, or *meng* in Chinese), banner (county, *hoshuu* or *qi*), and *sum* (township, *sum* or *sumu*). *Aimag* is a revival of the indigenous Mongol term for confederation, replacing the Qing imposition of *chuulgan* (assembly, translated as *hui meng* in Chinese).

What is worth noting is that the Chinese translations of the terms reflect the distinct character of the Mongol administrative tradition. Interestingly, even English preserves the Mongol characteristics of the terms rather than rendering them as prefecture, county or township. The situation of administrative names in other minority regions appears to be different. While the autonomous units at the provincial level are all called *qu* or region, the lower administrations are named *zizhi zhou* (autonomous prefecture), *zizhi xian* (autonomous county), or *minzu xiang* (nationality township), all Chinese terms with no cultural or historical connotation in the minority languages, although non-autonomous Chinese prefectures are called *diqu*, which is usually translated as 'prefecture' in English. Although this pattern is almost uniform all over China, no Chinese term is used to name administrations at the secondary level in Inner Mongolia, in deference to a Mongol desire to abolish all the Chinese provinces established in the territories of Inner Mongolia and restore the territories of the former Inner Mongolian banners that had been annexed by Chinese provinces. At the tertiary level, however, within Inner Mongolia we see a clear pattern of ethnic division: Mongol banners (*hoshuu or qi*) coexist with Chinese counties (*xian*), which is not only a manifestation of a lost battle to restore Mongol administrative characteristics, but also a forced recognition of reality that the Chinese constitute the overwhelming majority in the autonomous region overall and even in many rural areas. Nor should the banners be construed as purely Mongol in population. Banners are also studded with Chinese *xiang* (townships) along with the Mongolian counterparts *sum*. In parallel with these administrative names embroiled in ethnic struggle exist cities or municipalities (*hot* in Mongolian or *shi* in Chinese).

To sum up briefly, for minorities the naming of autonomous administrative territorial units is as important as their establishment *per se*, especially in Inner Mongolia. Naming is not a trivial issue, something simply decorative in nature. At issue are not just the symbolic importance of ethnic pride, but questions of autonomy and power relations between titular minorities and the non-titular Chinese majority. It is a common practice that sub-units of an autonomous area do not wear the modifier *zizhi* (autonomous) unless they pertain to a separate minority nationality. For instance, only three 'banners' in Inner Mongolia are 'autonomous', belonging to three different nationalities: Orochon, Ewenki and Daur. Mongol leagues or banners do not wear the 'autonomous' label, because it is assumed that Mongols are the titular nationality of the entire autonomous region, and they do not need to be autonomous within it. However, China's Law on Regional National Autonomy, either in the original 1984 version or the 2001 amendment, does not specify how to distinguish a Mongol administrative sub-unit from a Chinese sub-unit, given the existence of linguistic differentiation. Custom rules that Chinese in counties of Inner Mongolia are titular, and we may safely say that counties in Inner Mongolia are Chinese autonomous counties.

Therefore, naming an administrative unit as banner or county impinges on extreme ethnic sensitivity, as it is a matter of ethnic autonomy and power relations. While no more 'counties' are likely to be established in Inner Mongolia because of ethnic sensitivity and because of the overall trend of urbanization in China as a form of modernity (see below), the proliferation of cities or municipalities in Inner Mongolia is, among other things, also a reflection of this ethnic struggle, and a strategy of the Chinese to expand their territorial space. Cities are not supposed to be ethnic, or autonomous, as we can glean from the absence of 'city' in the definition of autonomous areas in China's Law on Regional National Autonomy. I argue that although cities are also customarily associated with things 'Chinese', this legal lacuna and the obvious benefits to locals, especially local officials, of being honored by the rise to city status checkmates ethnic sensitivity.[6] Before we go on to discuss this matter in relation to post-Mao economic development in the rest of China, let us examine briefly the tradition and practice of rectification of names as reflected within minority administrations.

This constant 'rectification of names' is of more than casual interest. Each change marked the brutal history of one nationality defeating the other, or a regime change. Let us discuss the names used for Ulaanhad. Although this latter term is alive and well in Mongolian, the official Chinese name for the city has always been Chifeng, Red Peak, the Chinese translation of Ulaanhad. Hongshan, Red Mountain, a less literal translation of Ulaanhad, is used to denote an archaeological site containing artifacts of the New Stone Age. Though largely filled with pastoral animal motifs, the so-called Hongshan Culture has been appropriated to construct a glorious ancient Chinese civilization. Chifeng was the capital of Jo'uda League until 1983 and is the capital of its successor Chifeng Municipality. What is surprising is that instead of calling it Jo'uda Municipality or Zhaowuda Shi, it was designated as Chifeng Municipality.

At one stroke, Jo'uda League, a Mongol league, was turned into a city with a Chinese name. This name change did not go unchallenged. According to a senior Mongol official who participated in the meeting that discussed the choice of the name, the then Party secretary Zhou Hui, a Chinese appointed by the CCP Central Committee, insisted on choosing Chifeng as the official name for the new municipality. A participant in the meeting opposed it and suggested that even if the original Mongol name Jo'uda were not used, at least the Mongol word Ulaanhad (Wulanhada in Chinese transliteration) for Chifeng should be chosen, if only to show a token deference to the Mongols' feeling in this region. According to my informant, Zhou Hui shouted angrily at the speaker for exhibiting Mongol nationalist sentiment. The speaker happened to be a Chinese, but Zhou mistook him for a Mongol, whose only mistake was to call for respecting the historical fact that Jo'uda League was a Mongol administration.

The change of Jirim League to Tongliao Municipality in October 1999 is a similar story. This is also a practice of replacing the Mongol league name with the name of the capital city, only that Tongliao is a straightforward Chinese name meaning 'penetrating or opening up the Liao' with its background of dealing with the Liao dynasty (A.D. 916–1125), a dynasty founded by the non-Chinese Kitan people. Worth noting is the justification for the name rectification. As the party secretary and the mayor of Tongliao Municipality wrote in their glowing piece published in *People's Daily* on October 6, 1999, 'This is the result of deepening reform, expanding opening-up, and accelerating development undertaken by the people of Tongliao under the leadership of the Party. . . . By replacing league with municipality (*che meng she shi*), history once again gives Tongliao people a development opportunity that comes only once in a thousand years.' They vowed,

> Replacing league with municipality opens a brand-new page for the development of Tongliao's economy. Our first term municipal party committee and the municipal government will, taking the replacement of league with municipality as the turning point, further emancipate the mind, grasp the opportunity, speed up the development, and carry a united, wealthy and civilized Tongliao into the 21st century. (Zhu Guangkai and Zhao Shuanglian 1999)

One cannot but notice a forward outlook expressed in the above rhetoric, as though the advancement of the people of Tongliao had been until 1999 hampered by the Mongol administrative unit called Jirim League, and the renaming had at long last emancipated them.

In contrast to these dismal stories of 'rectification of names' at the cost of the Mongol culture and autonomy, the change of Yekeju League to Ordos Municipality (E'erduosi Shi) appears to be encouraging, even gratifying. It is ostensibly the revival of the more authentic tribal name of the local Mongols, a name associated with the shrines of Chinggis Khan, replacing Yekeju, an administrative name imposed by the Qing dynasty and meaning 'Great Monastery'. Transformed into a municipality, Ordos appears to be both authentically Mongol and modern. Before going into the details that led to this interesting situation, let us first examine the urbanization process in Inner Mongolia and China at large.

Oedipus and Urbanization

Urbanization appears to be not only a side-effect of China's economic strategy, but its goal. The rate of urbanization has become the major index to measure the degree of a province's development. One of the schemes to accelerate urbanization is the conversion of counties and prefectures into cities, a scheme called in Chinese *zhen gai shi* (change town to city), *xian gai shi* (change county to municipality), and *di gai shi* (change prefecture to municipality). Cities and municipalities have proliferated as a result. Between 1979 and 1997, the number of cities increased from 193 to 668, of which 221 were prefecture-level municipalities (Xinhua News, Dec. 5, 1998).

Unlike some other minority regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang, which have their own uninterrupted urban tradition, it is only since 1949, after several centuries, that Mongols began to flow into cities in relatively large numbers as party, government, and educational personnel. Cities, associated with industrialization, became attractive to Mongols, who were then also mesmerized by the notion of socialist modernity. But their cultural role has never been resolved, for the Mongols have always maintained that their authentic Mongol culture is located in the grassland. This is reminiscent of Mao's suspicion of urban culture,[7] but while Mao's concern was ideological, Mongols' concerns are ethnic and cultural. Of course, the Chinese establishment of a formalized urban and rural divide policed by the institution called *hukou*, household registration, produced perhaps the largest inequality presided over by the Chinese Communist Party. With the peasantry discriminated against and locked into villages, urbanites, including industrial workers, have been protected as producers and vanguard forces in building the communist utopia. The Mongol sense of rurality and urbanity has been configured in such a context of Chinese administrative separation: while Mongols are supposed to live in *maljih oron* or *muqu* (pastoral regions), Chinese live in *tarialangiin oron* or *nongqu* (agricultural regions).

Although at present more Mongols are peasants than herdsmen and living in agricultural or semi-agricultural regions, instead of acknowledging this as a normal development, the historical memory of a painful transformation invariably represents it as a result of colonization and sinicization (Khan 1996). Cities, on the other hand, though usually associated with the Chinese because of history and the sheer numbers of Chinese settlers there, now provide some hope for transcending this ethnicity, as they represent modernity and the future of humanity. The result is that a contradictory combination of (a) a constant fear of losing their distinct Mongol culture and language in the Chinese-dominated cities, and (b) (their nostalgia for a pastoral homeland notwithstanding) a desire for modernity and the availability of modern amenities, products of China's ideological bent towards things urban, has driven a rapid Mongol flow into cities. An 'urban' Mongol category and an urban Mongol culture are on the rise, hybridized with both Chinese and modern elements.

Cities have expanded and flourished in Inner Mongolia since the 1950s. While many have developed from monastic centers or market towns to administrative centers of leagues and banners, a few are newly developed industrial towns, with plants and workers transferred from coastal China. Such cities are usually self-contained places, with little relation to the local neighboring society. The eminent Chinese anthropologist Fei Xiaotong ([1985] 2000) found in his study of Baotou in 1985 that most of the skilled workers who came in the 1950s and 1960s from inland China had aged, and many of their jobs had been inherited by their children, thus building a close kin society around the factories. He urged that Baotou should establish links with neighboring areas, exporting its skilled labor, so as to both help develop the neighboring economies, and perhaps find relief for the ever burgeoning population in a cramped city.

While Baotou is a municipality in Inner Mongolia, there are also a few enclaves built in recent decades and controlled directly by the central government in Beijing, to tap natural resources. Xuejiawan in eastern Yekeju League is a case in point. Built in the 1980s exclusively for the purpose of extracting coal from the world's largest open-pit coal mine, Xuejiawan's relations with Yekeju league or Inner Mongolia were limited until recently, when the seat of Jungar banner moved there from Shagedu. The labor is largely imported Chinese labor. The nature of such industrial towns or cities is reminiscent of cities built predominantly in minority regions by the central government in the late 1960s in its Third Front program (cf. Naughton 1988; Shapiro 2001: 139–94; Qiu Zeqi 1996). The difference is that while the earlier towns were justified for national defense purposes in the face of an ostensible threat of war with the Soviet Union, the post-Mao new towns are built for the explicit purpose of extracting natural resources.

Thanks to the state's fiscal devolution policy in the 1990s, non-coastal regions could exercise their own authority to devise more attractive policies. As all development-oriented regions, including Inner Mongolia, vie for their own comparative and competitive advantages to attract outside capital, they compete to remove ever more legal or administrative hurdles (cf. Hendrischke and Feng 1999). Cities have emerged as the centers where industrial miracles occur, pointing towards a future utopia, departing from Mao's ideological ambivalence, and are represented in the media as an embodiment of modernity 'replete with much of the palette of global capitalist renderings of "modernity" and its radically persuasive imagery of the good life, progress, and development' (Ballew 2001: 266). Cities have attracted millions of rural peasants in search of temporary jobs, while being denied basic benefits and usually barred from settlement. Material progress has been matched by political advancement. Barry Naughton (1995) finds the following distinction between cities during the Maoist period and contemporary cities. While the earlier cities enjoyed little autonomy, and indeed were subject to the twin policies of neglect and exploitation, the post-Mao period has seen the creation of 'conditions for a substantial expansion in the autonomy of cities and urban groups' (1995: 88). Cities are now allowed to keep a larger share of their fiscal revenues than before.

In April 2001 Xiao Jinchuan, a researcher for China's State Development Planning Commission, proposed that urbanization should be the main road to development in the western region of China. In his survey of ten 'Western' municipalities, provinces and autonomous regions, which includes Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang, there are 7 major cosmopolitan cities each with over one million people, and 37 prefecture-level municipalities. But there remain 22 prefectures and autonomous prefectures which still do not have cities, 16 of them being autonomous prefectures. Some of them simply have too few people to warrant a municipality status. Ali Prefecture in Tibet, for instance, has only 72,000 people. Still Xiao believes urbanization or municipalization is the answer to getting out of poverty. He argues,

> The fundamental significance of 'change prefecture to municipality' lies in transforming the '*xu*' (nominal) first-level government to a '*shi*' (concrete) first-level government, increasing its capability to allocate resources. In the 1980s the state promoted the systems of 'change prefecture to municipality' and 'municipality to administer county' throughout the country, in order to break down the administrative barriers that separate cities from their surrounding counties, so as to propel a coordinated urban–rural economic development. [. . .] However, in the western provinces and autonomous regions, due to the small size of cities and their weak functions, there are still 39 prefectures which are yet to become municipalities. (Xiao 2001)

This is apparently a prelude to the comprehensive urbanization program the State Development Planning Commission launched on August 8, 2001 for the tenth five-year-plan period (2001–2005). According to the blueprint document, the numbers of cities and towns increased respectively from 193 and 2,173 in 1978 to 663 and 20,312 in 2000. Meanwhile, the country's urban population increased from 170 million to 456 million, an increase from 17.9 per cent to 36.1 per cent of the total population. The government sets two different goals: it will restrict the number, but improve the quality of cities in the eastern region, and the priority for the western region is to increase the number of cities or municipalities. Urbanization is promoted as the major way to bridging the gap between the eastern and western parts of China.[8] Deng's regional and urban development policy thus produces a strong contrast between coastal/urban and frontier/rural, as well as a desire on the part of the frontier Chinese to 'open up' and 'catch up'. It also sets forth a new political dynamic that de-territorializes and re-territorializes frontier minority autonomous areas.

Post-Mao history is not all economy and finance, however. In the frontier minority regions, priority was initially given to restoring and expanding national autonomy, giving more power to the national minorities who had faced discrimination, or been subjected to harsh treatment – as in the case of Inner Mongolia, where a genocidal campaign against alleged Mongol underground nationalists cost tens of thousands of lives (cf. Tumen and Zhu 1995). Numerous new laws and regulations have been passed to enhance autonomous rights for the titular minorities (cf. Kaup 2000). The most significant achievement, despite all its problems, was the Law on Regional National Autonomy of 1984, drafted under the personal supervision of Ulanhu, the paramount Mongol (and nationality) leader in China from 1947 to 1966, and again in the 1980s (cf. Bulag 2002).

Local autonomy in the realm of culture and politics could not, however, be directly translated into economic advantage. In fact, local autonomy frequently constituted rebellion against central state penetration, aiming particularly to halt the inexorable Chinese migration, which had brought havoc during the Cultural Revolution and, throughout the long twentieth century, had undermined the position of the nationalities in their homelands. The problem, of course, is that, from an economic development perspective, migration and the provision of state resources were critical to the development of productive power. Since capital inflow was often accompanied by Chinese migration, Mongols faced a dilemma: to oppose migration risked further impoverishment, falling behind economically during a period of rapid growth. In the event, decision-making power was never exclusively in the hands of Mongols. Indeed, attempts to block or slow down, or even sentiments critical of Chinese migration have always been denounced as manifestations of local nationalism or national splittism, which is susceptible to harsh suppression by the Chinese leadership, which never admits to its own nationalism, not to speak of racism. As a result of the state's regional development policy that prioritized the coastal regions at the expense of the interior, and frontier ethnic resistance to the Chinese influx, minority regions, and Inner Mongolia in particular, 'lagged ever further behind,' constituting a 'third world' within China. Of course, no one wants to be poor, especially when one's neighbor is gaining power through wealth. This juxtaposition of regional disparity and ethnic disparity characterizes the emerging condition of Inner Mongolia.

In the last decade or so, broadly speaking, there have been three ways in which capital flows to the frontiers. We have already touched on the first, viz. the state's direct investment in the exploitation of natural resources in the frontier regions. In this massive flow of capital, minorities benefit little, nor do frontier Chinese much more, the reason being that the central government monopolizes the profits, with no or little share to local government. Moreover, much of the labor comes from outside, with few jobs for local minorities.[9]

The second is the Tibet and Xinjiang model. As a consequence of ethnic unrest and the specter of Tibetan and Uigur independence, the Chinese government has been transferring vast sums of money and large numbers of Han Chinese to settle and to develop the frontier economy, hoping to achieve the twin aims not only of consolidating the region with a Chinese settler population, but also of following the new reasoning in nationality policy that an economically contented minority would not aspire to secede from China. The model is such that the more politically volatile Tibet and Xinjiang become, the more money is likely to flow from the center.[10] But the sums are small in comparison to the foreign capital the coastal region attracts, and the local minorities do not benefit as much as the old and new settler Chinese population does.

Last but not least is the model pertaining to the southwestern minority and other less volatile regions, where, despite or because of continuing poverty, ethnic cultural tourism is a burgeoning business (cf. Schein 2000). Ethnic culture, as articulated by the former premier Zhao Ziyang's advisers Wang Xiaoqiang and Bai Nanfeng (1991) in *The Poverty of Plenty*, can be turned into capital. They argue that since the minorities lack technical skills that can be used to extract their region's abundant natural resources, they should get rich by capitalizing on their cultural differences through ethnic tourism.

Inner Mongolia is an interesting case, for it has the characteristics of all three models of capital flow. It is a frontier region with extremely rich natural resources; it has some degree of aspiration for more autonomy; and it is promoting Mongol culture for tourism. Although this periphery is rich in natural resources, the center controls most of them directly. What is interesting is that under such circumstances, envious of the prosperous coastal region and frustrated by Inner Mongolia's own sluggish development, some Chinese there vent their frustration on the Mongols, blaming them for being insufficiently rebellious in contrast to the Tibetans or the Uigurs. Had the Mongols made trouble, they imply, the center would have sent more money, some to the Mongols to appease them, and some to the local Chinese to reward their struggle against ethnic secessionism. This case illustrates an interesting but typical mentality of settler colonialists in a poor region, one that simultaneously blames the center and the local ethnic group for their own poor luck.

Unfortunately for Inner Mongolia, when China envisaged its 'Go West' plan in early 2000, Inner Mongolia was not included. To be excluded from the bandwagon of development was a serious moral blow. The Oedipus complex of the Inner Mongolian leadership is reflected in an officially sponsored book entitled *Inner Mongolia in the Eyes of Famous People* (Nei Menggu Zhengxie Biancuan Weiyuanhui 1999). In the often overblown but perhaps also excessively polite remarks contained in the book, the leadership hopes to encourage people to see the greatness of Inner Mongolia, past, present, and future.

The change of leagues to municipalities may thus be seen as a unique product of this Oedipus complex, which in turn has been generated by China's regional and urban economic development design. Although the change of Jo'uda League to Chifeng Municipality in 1983, Jirim League to Tongliao Municipality in 1999, Yekeju League to Ordos Municipality in 2001 and Hülübuir League to Hülünbuir Municipality are part of the national trend of municipalization, I argue that the Inner Mongolian cases reflect distinct local ethnopolitics. There appear to be many advantages in abandoning league administration in favor of a municipality. The primary aim for this change is, I argue, to overcome ethnic-autonomous barriers, so as to allow for more leeway to pursue predatory economic development without concern for social and environmental consequences. Regional national autonomy, when it cannot generate economic prosperity, and when it is understood as a barrier to economic prosperity, has to be discredited. Below I discuss how ethnicity and capitalism have been implicated in the creation of an interesting post-modern 'entity' – Ordos Municipality.

Ordos Municipality: A Corporate Model for Urbanizing Inner Mongolia?

The creation of Ordos Municipality was distinguished by one important point: instead of using Chinese names as in Chifeng and Tongliao, Yekeju was replaced by a more authentic Mongol tribal name – Ordos, instead of Dongsheng, the name of the capital city of the league.[11] Dongsheng is a town built in 1907 and was long exclusively Chinese, until the 1950s when it was chosen as the capital of the new Yekeju league. Elevated to the status of a county-level municipality in 1982, Dongsheng is now one of the most important clusters in the newly emerging Triangle of Hohhot, Baotou and Dongsheng. It has all the qualifications to be equal to or surpass Tongliao or Chifeng. But it failed. I argue that the adoption of Ordos was the result of a three-way process: Chinese appropriation of Chinggis Khan as a Chinese national hero; Mongol ethno-nationalist promotion of Chinggis Khan as a Mongolian hero and Ordos culture as representative of Inner Mongolian culture; and Chinese adoption of Ordos as a cashmere sweater brand, which has become the most famous Inner Mongolian brand name in China.

The territory of Yekeju League, surrounded by the Great Wall to the south, and encircled by the Yellow River to the west, north and east, is known as Ordos internationally as well as within China. Archeologists may be familiar with the so-called Ordos bronze, a naming that uses a backward-reading of history. The Ordos Mongols were relatively late-comers who settled in the region as recently as the 16th century, and the association of the Ordos bronze with the region was the product of a Mongol attempt to worship and safeguard Chinggis Khan's shrine. Nonetheless, the recoding has been taken as presuppositional. Thus, when some western scholars discuss the Han-Xiongnu conflict two thousand years earlier, they refer to the territory as Ordos (cf. Waldron 1990).

The Manchu seemed not entirely sure of how to deal with the subethnic identity of the Ordos Mongols. While administered in a Yekeju League, meaning Big Monastery, deriving from the largest Buddhist temple Wangiin Ju in the region, the banners within the league were however named after Ordos: all the banners, until mid-20th century, were divided into two wings of Ordos, eastern and western, and each was called in accordance with its location, for instance, Ordos West Wing Front Banner, etc. This is because the Manchus, while promoting Buddhism in order to better control the Mongols, also encouraged the cult of Chinggis Khan, claiming that their emperors were reincarnate successors of Chinggis. And Ordos is the plural form of Ordon, meaning 'eight special imperial ritual tents' (*naiman chagaan ordon*) housing Chinggis Khan's shrine and those of his consorts and other Mongol historical figures.

With the collapse of the Qing, Ordos became a hotbed of contention as the Chinggis Khan shrine was critical to Mongol nationalism. As early as 1910, the Buryat nationalist intellectual Tseveen Zamcarano, who was actively involved in Outer Mongolia's independence, paid homage to the Chinggis shrine in Ordos, and advised Mongolia's foreign minister to take Chinggis Khan's Black Standard (*har süld*) as the national emblem (cf. Bulag 1998). In the subsequent Mongolian expedition to Inner Mongolia seeking unification in 1913, one column advanced in the direction of Ordos with the aim of taking the shrine. The new international signification of the Chinggis Khan shrine in Ordos apparently alarmed Chinese historians and archeologists, prompting them to investigate the real location of Chinggis's tomb. A series of debates between the renowned Chinese Mongolist Tu Qi and the geographer Zhang Xiangwen was published between 1915 and 1917 in China's leading journal of geography *Dixue Zazhi* (The Journal of Geographical Science). Zhang claimed that he had 'discovered' Chinggis' tomb in Ordos during his tour, while Tu Qi, as a historian, insisted that Chinggis' tomb was actually in Outer Mongolia. Although ostensibly academic in nature, given the contemporary context of Mongolian nationalism and the rise of Chinggis Khan as a Mongolian national symbol, their spirited debate certainly helped draw Chinese attention to Chinggis' shrine in Ordos and elevate its profile in Chinese history.[12]

It was however not until the post-Mao period, after the thorough destruction of the Chinggis Khan shrine during the Cultural Revolution, that Mongols in the region began to take the initiative to promote a local 'Ordos culture' in relation to Chinggis Khan. Ordos songs, Ordos weddings, and Ordos women's dresses have become the core of 'Inner Mongolian' culture, due not only to a new folkloric aesthetization, but also to the general identification of the Mongols with Chinggis Khan. The attractiveness of the Ordos songs, weddings and dresses make them particularly suitable for representing Inner Mongolia at large. However, as ethnic tourism develops, Mongols are now feminized.[13] When tourists go to the grassland of Inner Mongolia, wherever it may be, they are greeted and entertained by lines of Ordos-dressed young girls with the famous Ordos drinking song, *Altan Hundag* (Gold Cup).

This feminized Ordos Mongol culture as representative of Inner Mongolian culture is particularly odd when accompanied by the promotion of the Chinggis Khan cult. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the so-called Chinggis Khan Mausoleum, a historic misnomer,[14] has been promoted not so much as a Mongol cultural tradition of ancestral worship but as the shrine of a Chinese hero, the greatest hero, 'the only Chinese who ever defeated the Europeans'. The mausoleum has been renovated, expanded and now modeled after Sun Zhongshan's Mausoleum in Nanjing, attracting millions of Chinese tourists every year to experience the glory of China's racial victory over the Whites.[15]

But these ethnocultural developments alone would never make a league into a municipality, for urbanization has to do with industrialization. Until the 1970s, the league had been a rather poor region, with a dual economy of pastoralism and agriculture. In the 1980s, however, the league began to develop three major industries: cashmere sweaters, coalmining and chemicals. They were so successful in the 1990s that they became the three most successful industries in the whole of Inner Mongolia. They were also the three earliest Inner Mongolian industries to be listed on the stock markets in Shanghai and Shenzhen in 1994. Between 1995 and 1997 the core companies of the Ordos Group Corporation, the Yekeju League Chemical Industrial Group Corporation, and the Yekeju Coal Group Corporation made up one third of all the stocks of Inner Mongolian companies in the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock markets, and they raised funds exceeding 2 billion yuan, constituting over 70 per cent of all the capital in Inner Mongolia raised on the stock market (Cheng and Wang 1998: 173). Today, these three industrial groups have become cross-regional and trans-national companies.

The Ordos Group Corporation is particularly interesting. Established in 1994, its core company, the Ordos cashmere factory, took its name 'Ordos' only in 1992. Its predecessor was the Yikezhao (Yekeju) League Cashmere Factory, built in 1980 with Japanese investment and machinery. That the factory decided to adopt 'Ordos' in 1992 as its name is not surprising, because by then the name Ordos had become famous through folkloric enhancement. We may also grant the possibility that the company, because of its export-orientation, was particularly eager to find an eye-catching brand name for its product, as is the business convention in the West. Nothing seemed to be better than the word 'Ordos'. In the mid-1990s, the newly appointed Party Secretary of Inner Mongolia, Liu Mingzu, made it known that promoting top brands was his strategy for developing the

Inner Mongolian economy. With this Party encouragement and the company president Wang Linxiang's astute management, Ordos brand cashmere sweaters have become a household brand throughout China. Seductive advertisements with the line *'The Ordos Cashmere Sweater Warms the Entire World'* beam across TV screens in China, and Ordos cashmere sweater billboard posters have become major landscapes in many urban centers. Ordos, or rather its misspelt, though official, rendition "Erdos" brand trade mark, was formally recognized as a 'famous Chinese trade mark' by the state industrial and commercial administration bureau of China on January 5, 1999. The brand value of 'Erdos' topped 3.416 billion yuan in 2000; it is the most famous brand amongst China's textile products and also the most valuable brand in Inner Mongolia.[16]

The spectacular success of the Ordos Group Corporation lent tremendous power to the debate about China's regional development strategy. As early as the 1980s, the Yikezhao League Cashmere Factory, the predecessor of the Ordos Group Corporation, was a major model used by scholars and officials in the interior provinces and autonomous regions against the central government's diffusion model or the so-called 'ladder-step theory,' i.e. 'China's development was to proceed one step at a time from the coastal region to the interior regions' (Yang 1993: 301). In the argument of what coalesced as the 'western school,' the ladder-step theory was considered detrimental to the development of the western region. This school challenged the official assumption of the ladder-step theory which held that the backwardness of the western region was a matter of economic efficiency, arguing instead that the so-called industrial inefficiency of the interior regions was 'calculated on the basis of state-fixed prices which depress those of extractive industries' (ibid. 303). 'Their favorite example,' writes Dali Yang, 'is the Yi[kezhao] League Woolen Sweater Factory and the wool processing industry in general in Inner Mongolia. Imported from abroad in the early 1980s, this factory soon bested its coastal competitors by becoming the most efficient and profitable enterprise in mainland China's wool processing industry' (ibid.). It may thus be argued that the factory played an important role in helping to shift China's focus from the coastal region to the interior regions in the early 1990s, gaining much symbolic, political and economic capital for the factory and its successor – Ordos Group Corporation (see also Cheng and Wang 1998: 242–4).

Promoting the 'Erdos' brand name thus became its strategy for success, capitalizing on the ethnopolitical significance of this region's tribal name associated with Chinggis Khan. Indeed, this industrially promoted, lyrically aestheticized, brand name has accrued and is continuing to accrue tremendous value for the company. Unfortunately, the value-laden 'Erdos' brand has nothing to do with promoting Mongol culture, or helping Mongols.

Far from benefiting the local Mongols who have been encouraged to raise goats, which in turn has led to rapid desertification, the successful Ordos company deserted the local Mongols and cast its eyes elsewhere and on the Mongol herders in the Republic of Mongolia. Their recent domination of the Mongolian cashmere market has aroused strong Mongolian nationalist feelings (Rossabi 2000: 72–74). Indeed, the company's predatory exploitation of cashmere resources has begun to undermine its own success. In 1999, 95 per cent of the more than 80 medium and small size cashmere processors in Linghe city near Baotou stopped production, and the Ordos cashmere group had 1,200,000 cashmere sweaters piled up in stock, valued at 0.7 billion yuan, and the Luwang cashmere group in Baotou had 900,000 pieces in stock, valued at 0.5 billion yuan. There were 7 million pieces in stock in Inner Mongolia in 1999, more than the entire sales volume in the Chinese and international markets in that whole year (Wang, Qin and Ding 2001: 16).

Nonetheless, this exploitation of cashmere resources, both locally and internationally, as well as the crisis it has created, has not stopped the Ordos group from appropriating local history and historical images. Nor does it prevent it from imposing a corporate model on Yekeju League. In a hagiographical book promoting the Ordos Group Corporation and its two companions, the two Chinese authors, Cheng Li and Wang Xun, write as though that the Ordos Group Corporation was the real force in the Ordos renaissance: 'Ordos is like a golden steed, soaring up, galloping in the front in the picture of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region's rapidly advancing economy.' (Cheng and Wang 1998: 210). The following passage invoking Chinggis Khan is particularly pertinent:

> The proud son of heaven Chinggis Khan once fixed his eagle-like eyes on this mysterious land, not only decreeing that he be buried here upon death, but leaving Ordos with the following masterpiece, composed in the 'refined' style which he was not good at:
>
> [It is a place]
> For stags to graze
> For hoopoes to lay eggs
> For a declined state to revive, and
> For me to enjoy happiness.
>
> However, he did not live long enough to see the 'revival' of the place in its true meaning; the army was pulled back, and his body died; the disparity between ideal and reality persisted stubbornly in Ordos, which shaded off in the last moment of his memory (ibid. 211).

The arrogance of the above passage is reminiscent of Mao's 1936 poem 'Snow' in which he compared himself to all the ancient emperors, including Chinggis Khan, and was convinced that only he could become a greater hero. And the truly great men today, according to Cheng Li and Wang Xun, are Wang Linxiang, president of the Ordos Group Corporation, Li Wu, president of the Yekeju League Chemical Industry Group, and Zhang Shuangwang, president of the Yekeju League Coal Group. It is they who, according to them, have made Ordos a household name in China, and it is they who have made Ordos great beyond the expectation of Chinggis Khan. They deliberately mystify, 'Someone made a joke: ten years ago, many outsiders did not know where Yekeju League is located. Spreading out a map of China, they looked for it carefully everywhere under a magnifier for a whole day, without any luck. They then burst out in anger: 'Why do you fool me with a false place name?' (ibid. 156). Ten years later, in contrast, 'The advertisement line "The Ordos cashmere sweater warms the whole world" is known to everybody. In fact, many people remember Ordos only after first knowing this product, the cashmere sweater. Only when they remember the name of this plateau do they start to follow with great interest the take-off of the Yekeju League' (ibid. 219).

With these bloated wannabe claims, it becomes natural that they should be the masters of this Ordosland which they claim to have made prosperous and famous. If the League assisted them to make a success, now the League must be transformed to fit the success they have made. The time is now ripe for a fundamental transformation or reterritorialization: the land they live in and the site of the profits it produces must now be made a municipality and called Ordos. Since the momentum has been built, the 'propensity' does not have to be enforced. A Chinggis-laden, post-modernist, globe-trotting and yet exotic Ordos Municipality came naturally to replace the feudal, backward and Mongol-flavored Yekeju League. And Yekeju, which means Great Monastery, with its celibate overtone is particularly inappropriate in this new age when libido drives humans towards utopia.

Concluding Remarks: Urbanization and the Future of Inner Mongolian 'Autonomy'

If Inner Mongolia suffers at the hands of the more industrialized coastal provinces, can the industrialization of Inner Mongolia do anything good for its own disadvantaged minority? This question immediately points to the issue of ethnicity, and more importantly to the impact of municipalization on 'autonomy' – or rather on the remaining token degree of autonomy.

In a policy recommendation, Luo Shujie and Xu Jieshun (1999), two Chinese ethnologists from the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, allege that the Law on Regional National Autonomy passed in 1984 has never been taken seriously as legally binding, and thus that it must be scrapped and a new law passed to reflect the new reality. While they have good suggestions such as establishing authorities to interpret the law and a court to implement the law, there is one point that looks especially glaring in this context. They suggest that 'Autonomous Region' be changed to 'Autonomous Province,' so that people would not take autonomous regions for county-level regions (1999: 10). The authors' opinion may be right in a narrow sense, but they reflect the continuing impulse of the Chinese-cum-Confucian 'rectification of names,' as they explicitly write: 'Therefore, changing "autonomous region" to "autonomous province" can serve the function of rectifying names, favorable not only to the consolidation of the status of the provincial-level autonomous areas, but also to the provincial-level autonomous areas' participation in international exchanges' (ibid.). Autonomy looks odd, and it must be made to conform to 'normalcy' and the wider pattern. And this normalcy-seeking passion is precisely the source of the power that eliminates any historically embedded 'differences,' the *raison d'etre* for nationality autonomy.

Cities or municipalities are not autonomous areas, as they are not stipulated as autonomous in China's Law on Regional National Autonomy. Autonomous areas include only regions, prefectures and counties. In Inner Mongolia, with more than half of the prefecture-level administrative units having already become municipalities, and with other county-level municipalities, perhaps more than 70 per cent of the populations are already 'urbanites.' And given China's ambitious plan, which sets urbanization as its new goal of modernity, and its form of urbanization by changing the name of counties and prefectures to municipalities, we may safely predict that the leagues are doomed to become municipalities.

In a paper on the direction and characteristics of urbanization in Inner Mongolia, Shi Xiangshi (1999) writes that urbanization has three functions: 1. It is an effective means to accelerate the economic development of Inner Mongolia; 2. It will lead to improved economic structures, not only creating more jobs but attracting more capital and skills; 3. It will elevate people's educational and scientific levels, and improve their 'quality' (1999: 108–109). He writes that with the industrialization of the countryside, the urban-rural structure has been altered, breaking down the isolation of cities, enabling them to absorb large numbers of surplus rural labor. But in Inner Mongolia the government's fiscal power is limited, so there is not enough government money to be used to promote urbanization. Instead, he argues that combining market forces with the administrative power of the government in promoting urbanization is a unique Inner Mongolian characteristic of urbanization. He mentions that the change of Jirim League to Tongliao Municipality and the change of the suburbs to boroughs in Hohhot are two examples of using the government's 'extra-territorial power' (*waibu liliang*) to create conditions for urbanization (1999: 112).

In other words, the change of leagues to municipalities does not mean that these leagues have already been urbanized because of rural industrialization, as is happening in many parts of China (cf. Naughton 1995: 81–86). Rather it is an intention or a 'desire' for urbanization! It is a desire for more jobs, more capital inflow, and of course more prosperity. And the old system, including the ethnic form and content of autonomy, is considered a hindrance, something that must be scrapped using the government's 'extraterritorial power.' A *shi* or municipality is to be hauled in to exorcise the failure of modernization in minority regions. Municipalization is therefore more of a narrative of the future than of the past or present. Thus it is not quite a celebration of achievement, but a yearning for a utopian moment with an enthusiasm quite comparable to the building of 'People's Communes' (*renmin gongshe*), with their characteristic drum beating, flag waving, and people parading, in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The change of Yekeju League to Ordos Municipality might be both to consolidate the gains of industrial development and to pave the road to facilitate further economic growth. Failure to do so would suffocate the budding economy, hence the necessity to rectify the name 'in accordance with the truth of things' (cf. Ware 1980). If that 'truth of things' in Confucian parlance is reincarnated as '*kaifa*' (open up and develop) and remains so for a long time, and if Inner Mongolian autonomy is considered a hindrance to that truth of things, what could prevent name-rectification, so as to ensure that 'affairs' be carried on to success?

The above conclusion sounds a bit alarmist, but it must be understood in the perspective of Chinese political culture. In China, an important concept in comprehending historical transformation is *shi* ('tendency' or 'propensity'), which is imbedded in the eternal concern with change. 'Historical tendency,' writes François Jullien, 'bestows a necessary direction and a logical end upon all evolution. And this direction, this result, always stems anew from the play of factors making up the relations of force at a given moment' (1995: 208–9). Individuals are deemed powerless to change the tendency, but they must 'appraise the moment in such a way as to detect its tendency and, consequently, seek to conform with its coherence' according to the medieval Chinese philosopher Wang Fuzhi (quoted in Jullien 1999: 209). In this view, people are denied subjectivity, and so are institutions, as Wang Fuzhi writes, 'the state of things evolves in accordance with the tendency, and institutions must be adapted accordingly' (quoted in Jullien 1999: 186).

In our context, urbanization has already been accepted as an irreversible historical tendency, but the question remains whether institutions must be adapted accordingly or must work to harness urbanization to ends that would not only benefit all citizens but also respect the history of the land. To what extent is the relative lack of Mongol resistance the result of the state's high-handed policy, or the result of Mongol acceptance of urbanization as an unstoppable historical tendency? Or have the Mongols been induced, as Pierre Bourdieu puts it (1991: 7), 'to collaborate in the destruction of their instruments of statement'? The future of Inner Mongolia, whether or not it will remain a Mongol autonomous region, if only in name, will be largely determined by the answers to the above questions.

There are already ominous signs. Although the name 'Ordos' is famous and the Chinese characters used for it convey some kind of aesthetic feeling, especially in Chinese calligraphy, we cannot predict that it will not be subject to Chinese culture or twisted for some purpose, such as abridging it to keep only the first character, thus calling it 'Eshi', as in the case of 'Hushi' for Hohhot. What is more, Erdos and 鄂尔多斯 are private properties of the Erdos Group Corporation. As Wolfgang Fritz Haug writes on the privatization of brand names,

> Spending 'many millions' of Deutchmarks on a brand-name campaign, which entails appropriating and privatizing a word in common usage and consciousness and making it into a name exclusive to one's own commodity, is seen by the capitalists as a normal purchase, and what has thus been 'earned' is regarded self-evidently as a piece of private property. The words turned into brand-names by the campaign now become a part of the company's capital assets (1986: 28–29).

Similarly, it would be conceivable for Erdos, Ordos, or 鄂尔多斯 to be sold to any other party or individual for a commercial purpose. A more ominous question is whether the name Ordos in its various linguistic guises would be denied to the Mongols themselves as well. As countless legal cases of cultural appropriation by Euro-Americans of indigenous names, stories, and other cultural forms and substances show, this is a possibility (cf. Ziff and Rao 1997).

The story of the demise of Yekeju League and the birth of Ordos Municipality is one example of alter/native modernity. While it shares certain characteristics of the national pattern, it is also unique in its entanglement of capitalism, colonialism and ethnicity. It is a story of the settler-colonial corporate branding of a native region, distilling Ordos from its folkloric tradition to point to a bright future. But such branding using a native symbol and name can only be understood in the meaning as given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2000): branding simultaneously connotes the corporate labeling of a thing and the permanent, physical, even violent transformation and commodification of both things and living beings (cf. Greenberg 2000: 22)

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Notes

1 This paper was written in 2002. Since then two more leagues have been turned into municipalities, both in 2003: Bayannuur League to Bayannuur Municipality, and Ulaanchab League to Ulaanchab Municipality.

2 China has a long tradition of studying frontier geography and administration. In recent decades numerous publications have appeared in China, which usually extol the positive function of Chinese administrative incorporation for bringing about Chinese unity, while mildly attack Chinese chauvinistic attitudes in such practices.

3 In an important study propounding the establishment of the *tusi* (native administration) system during the Yuan, Bai Yaotian (1999) argues that the *tusi* system instituted by the Mongols differs fundamentally from the earlier Chinese *jimi* or 'loose rein' system, which usually treated non-Chinese people as animals. As explained in Sima Qian's *Shi Ji* (The Records of the Grand Historian of China): '*Ji* is to bridle horse, while *mi* is to yoke an ox. To speak of controlling four kinds of barbarians is like bridling and yoking horses and oxen' (quoted in Bai 1999: 98). The Mongols, on the other hand, according to Bai, treated them as '*wumin*', meaning 'our people' (ibid. 98).

4 Mongols at the time were under the jurisdiction of Lingbei xing zhongshu sheng (*xingsheng*), although this province or regional secretariat was somewhat different from the Chinese *xingsheng*, and subjected to a looser form of administrative control by the Great Khan (cf. Endicott-West 1989: 12–13).

5 The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region was not a provincial level administrative unit after all, rather a supra-provincial administration equivalent to the six other administrative regions of China, such as North China Administrative Region, etc. It was only in 1954, when province was made the highest local administration, that the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region was downgraded to the provincial level, albeit without changing region to province. The downgrading cost the Mongols a great degree of autonomy, as the ministries (*bu*) had also to be changed to departments (*ting, ju*).

6 As more minorities have been settling in urban areas, China has decided to shift its 'nationality work' from rural areas to urban centers. In 2000 the Chinese State Nationalities Affairs Commission published in both Chinese and English a collection of laws and regulations that aim to guarantee urban ethnic minorities' rights and interests (State Ethnic Affairs Commission 2000). It is interesting to note that, as a clear signal to depoliticize national minorities and make them into non-territorial ethnic minorities, the English translation consistently rendered *minzu* into 'ethnic group', rather than the customary 'nationality'. Even the Law on Regional National Autonomy is now retranslated as the 'Law on the Regional Autonomy of Ethnic Groups'. It is not clear whether such translations, which have fundamental political and legal implications, have been legally ratified by China's National People's Congress, or whether they are just a reflection of legal chaos.

7 Mao's ambivalence to cities may have stemmed from the Chinese nationalist and intellectual romanticization of the peasantry and the rural. Li Dazhao, once Mao's tutor, for instance wrote in 1919, comparing city life to the life of 'ghosts' and country life to that of the 'people': 'My young friends drifting about in the cities! You should know that the cities are full of crime, and that great contentment is to be found in the villages; that life in the city is more or less the life of a ghost, but that the work going on in the villages is the work of people; that the air in the city is foul and the air in the villages is pure.

Why don't you just pack up your things, settle your travel expenses and go back to your home towns?' (quoted in Fitzgerald 1996: 136).

8 See the full text 'Shiwu Chengzhenhua Fazhan Zhongdian Zhuanxiang Guihua' (The Key Plan for Urbanization during the Tenth Five Year Plan Period) at http: //www.people.com.cn August 8, 2001.

9 The newly revised Law of Regional National Autonomy (passed on February 28, 2001) aims to provide a legal framework to facilitate resource extraction and major infrastructure construction, which are now the main priorities for minority nationality areas. The revised law stipulates that the state will 'adopt measures' to give a 'certain level' of 'compensation' to minority nationality areas that supply natural resources (Article 65). It appears to be an improvement on the Chinese constitution, which states: 'In exploiting natural resources [which according to Article 9 are owned by the state] and building enterprises in the national autonomous areas the state shall give due consideration to the interests of those areas' (Article 118).

10 For this kind of development, see Wang Lixiong's book *Tianzang: Xizang de Mingyun* (Sky Burial: the Fate of Tibet) 1998. He however argues that because of the high altitude of Tibet, Chinese from the low land will never be able to settle in Tibet permanently.

11 The cosmopolitan area of Dongsheng city is now called Ordos city, while its suburb is called Dongsheng Qu (Borough). Interestingly, Tongliao city has a Ke'erqing Qu (Horchin Borough), Horchin being the sub-ethnonym of a Mongolian group, the most populous Mongol group in Inner Mongolia. This is perhaps a tradeoff between Mongols and Chinese. Chifeng city has three boroughs: Hongshan, Songshan, and Yuanbaoshan.

12 For a collection of these texts, see Liu Yizheng, Shariledai, Ce. Alatengsongbuer (eds.) 1988.

13 For my critique of the thesis of the feminization of minorities in China, see Bulag (2002).

14 Since Chinggis Khan's remains are not in Ordos, it is a mistake to call the shrine in Ordos the Chinggis Khan Mausoleum. This mistake was initiated by Ulanhu who in 1956 wrote the inscription 'Chengjisi Han Ling' in Chinese, which is translated as Chinggis Khanii Ongon in Mongolian (Chinggis Khan Mausoleum). The traditional Mongol name is Naiman Chagaan Ordon (Eight White Palaces).

15 According to a recent Xinhua report ('Genghis Khan's Tomb Tourism Zone to Be Upgraded,' Hohhot, December 10, 2001), Inner Mongolia plans to invest 200 million yuan to build the area of Chinggis Khan's Mausoleum into 'a world-class tourist destination.' The two-year project will cover 80 sq. km.

16 See the Corporation's website: http: //www.chinaerdos.com/english/news/index.html.

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4

Where is the Centre? The Spatial Distribution of Power in Post-Socialist Rural Mongolia

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The aim of this chapter is to discuss local concepts of power in Northern Mongolia's Shishged Depression with particular reference to how the social prominence of different kinds of persons is embedded within this environment. Rather than restricting my discussion to one form of social prominence, my objective is to present a general overview of 'political types' (Sahlins 1963) among the Shishged Darhads today. While the specific elements of this micro-political survey are likely to be specific to the Shishged Depression, there is good reason to expect that its general characteristics are relevant to other rural contexts in post-socialist Mongolia.

The title above refers to a persistent ethnographic puzzle. Often during my fieldwork in Northern Mongolia[1] I found myself wondering where the centre of social life was situated. My Darhad informants, it seemed to me, did not operate with one concept of what a centre is, but rather with several such concepts. While all people certainly saw the capital of Ulaanbaatar as a national centre, many also seemed to entertain alternative perspectives upon which urban centres like Ulaanbaatar appeared as a periphery. Indeed, while there was much talk about people moving to the capital in search for a better life, it struck me that relatively few concrete cases seemed to substantiate this rumour. Unlike most rural districts in the Hövsgöl Province[2], the two predominantly Darhad districts of the Shishged Depression, Ulaan-Uul and Renchinlhümbe, have thus not experienced a population decrease during the late 1990s[3]. It is true that, due to the high birth rate in rural Mongolia, this fact does not exclude the possibility of a certain migration from the Shishged Depression over this period. Yet, given that the economic situation in the Shishged Depression is no less dire than in neighbouring areas[4], the relative lack of migration from the Darhad homeland in comparison with other rural districts in the Hövsgöl Province does pose a significant ethnographic question.

I want to argue that one factor behind the Shishged Darhads' propensity to stay inheres in the complex interface between forms of social agency and forms of spatial perception in Shishged social life. This will be done by adopting the spatial distinction between the margin and the centre in order to discuss the social prominence of Shishged religious specialists and leaders respectively. Many anthropologists have used this distinction as a heuristic device for explaining the positioning of different kinds of social persons. Leaders have frequently been described as entertaining a centred position in their communities, whereas the term marginal has been used to denote various subaltern persons stigmatised with respect to the social order (see e.g. Tsing 1993; Day et. al. 1999).

In what follows, I want to take this convention one step further by arguing that the sociological – or metaphorical – contrast between centred and marginal persons corresponds to a topographical – or literal – contrast in the Shishged landscape. Different Shishged specialists, religious and otherwise, are not only marginal in the sociological sense of the word, they are also marginal in the topographical sense – and the converse goes for the different Shishged leaders, informal and otherwise. What is more, two kinds of centre can be in distinguished in the Shishged Darhad spatial economy, absolute centres and relative centres, and the social prominence of different leaders can be explained with respect to their positioning within this framework. The result, then, will be an analytical triangulation that serves to map out 'the horizon of prominence' among the Shishged Darhads today.

The Darhad People

The Darhads, who number around 18,000, are a Mongolian speaking group of pastoralists, hunters and village dwellers. They inhabit the remote northwestern corner of the Hövsgöl Province, which is located some 1.000 km away from the national capital of Ulaanbaatar, and some 200 km away from the provincial capital, Mörön. The Darhads originate from a complex mix of clan groupings, only some of which were Mongolian in cultural and linguistic terms, the rest being Tuvinian, Urianhai and, possibly, Tungus of origin (Badamhatan 1986: 24–25; 41–63). Today, these original clans (*ovog, yas*) are largely defunct in sociological and economical terms (indeed, most Darhads do not subscribe to any clan identity), although many people still make reference to them, especially in the context of the Darhads' shamanist religion, where clan still plays a crucial role (Badamhatan 1986: 157–94; Even 1988–89: 110–74; Dulam 1992).

The Darhads cluster around a specific region, which also bears their name. The Shishged Depression – also known as the Darhad Depression – is large and isolated lowland situated in between three mountain ranges, just south-east of Mongolia's border with the Tuvinian Autonomous Republic of Russia, and west from Hövsgöl Nuur, Mongolia's largest freshwater lake. In geographical terms, the Shishged Depression is quite unique in the Mongolian context, as it is comprised by a flat steppe zone surrounded to all sides by dense coniferous forests and alpine lands (collectively known as the *taiga*). About half of the total Darhad population is registered in one of the Shishged Depression's three districts; and the Shishged Depression is the only region in Mongolia where Darhads are in majority, although the region also is home to other ethnic groupings, notably a small group of indigenous Tsaatang (or Dukha) reindeer-breeders as well as a not insignificant number of Halh settlers originating from the Communist period. The Darhads' predominance in the Shishged Depression is no coincidence. For a period of nearly two hundred years, the Shishged Depression constituted the main territory of the so-called Darhad Ih Shav', a Buddhist ecclesiastical estate under the direct jurisprudence of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, the leading reincarnation (or 'Living Buddha') of pre-revolutionary Mongolia's Buddhist church (see Badamhatan 1986: 24–26; Bawden 1986: 68–80; Ewing 1981). It was this estate, which turned the Darhads into a homogeneous group of ecclesiastical subjects (*shabinar*) corresponding to a specific territory of land, and it was this ecclesiastical estate, which established the Buddhist religion firmly in the Shishged region (see Sandschejew 1930: 22–30; Badamhatan 1986: 26–34; Pedersen forthcoming).

Following Mongolia's revolution in 1921, and the death of the 8th and last Jebtsundamba Khutuktu (Javdzandamba Hutagt) in 1924, the Shishged region became subject to a series of socialist reforms which steadily undermined the position of the church. In 1938, as part of the Communists' final showdown with the Buddhist church, the Shishged region's four monasteries were demolished, and the monks (*lamas*) were killed, imprisoned or otherwise immobilised. From 1960 and onwards, the region's population were made compulsory members of two recently established collective farms (*negdel*) – and, from 1985, a state farm as well – and these state-socialist institutions soon came to organise practically all aspects of Shishged political and economic life. In 1989–90, with the collapse of the Communist state, and with the subsequent introduction of a market economy and democratic reforms, the institutional and political framework of Mongolia's planned economy was wiped away. During the early 1990's, most livestock and other collective assets from the former *negdels* were privatised. Faced with a nation-wide economic crisis and a deteriorating infrastructure, the majority of households in the Shishged Depression reverted to an economy based primarily on nomadic pastoralism, but with various supplementary economic activities such as hunting, berry foraging and petty trading.

Marginal and Centred Prominence

Only few attempts have been made to systematically analyse the different forms of social prominence in Mongolian societies. Caroline Humphrey (1996) has made the most recent such synthesis. Humphrey shows that, in pre-revolutionary Daur society, the prominence of the 'old man' (*utaachi*) was fundamentally differently constituted than the prominence of the 'shaman' (*yadgan*). Where the *utaachi* was an epitome of experiences accessible to every (senior) male person, and thus would 'emerge from the ranks of men in general' (Humphrey 1996: 60), the *yadgan* 'was someone, male or female, who was differently constituted as a person from ordinary people', because he or she was perceived able 'to become at one with a spirit, and consequently. . . journey into the cosmos, and come to know what ordinary people could not know' (Humphrey 1996: 31). In political and religious terms, the elder and the shaman thus represented two contrasting 'poles of sensibility' (Humphrey 1996: 63) in Daur social life.

I now suggest that a comparable distinction between a marginal sensibility and a centred sensibility can be posited in contemporary Darhad social life, and that this distinction will bring us a good way towards understanding the horizon of prominence in the Shishged Depression. I define marginal prominence as the social agency manifested through the practises of Shishged religious specialists, a notion of power on which these persons stand out by being 'more different from others than are others from others'. Centred prominence, conversely, is the social agency manifested through the practises of Shishged leaders, a notion of power on which these persons stand out by being 'more similar to others than are others to others'. But who are 'the others' in question? Are these others men, women or both? Are they juniors, seniors or both? Are the others Darhads only, or do they comprise non-Darhads as well? Let me engage with these important ethnographic questions by first considering the case of Shishged specialists in a historical perspective, after which I shall turn to the corresponding case of the Shishged leaders.

Marginal Specialists

Several scholars of Inner Asia, such as Jagchid & Hyer (1979: 74–75; 163–175), Heissig (1980: 1–6) and Hamayon (1994: 86–88), have pointed out that, in pre-revolutionary Mongolian societies, certain informal status positions stood in opposition to the more formal status positions endorsed by the Manchu colonial polity and the dominant Gelugpa Buddhist church. Of these, the shaman (*böö*) undoubtedly is the most well-known, but it is important to emphasise that a whole range of different status positions were marginal to the dominant social order. I am thinking of statuses such as blacksmith (*darhan hün*), midwife (*eh barigch*), 'bone-setter' (*bariach*) and diviner (*meregch*), either of which status, like that of shaman, corresponded to a certain extraordinary 'power/ability' (*hüch chadal*) understood to reside within the persons in question.

At first glance, pre-revolutionary Darhad society resembled its Daur Mongolian counterpart, as briefly described above. Both societies were characterised by the absence of a local nobility, by the central position of male (clan) elders, and by the marginal position of male and female shamans. However, whereas Buddhism never gained foothold in Daur society (Humphrey 1996: 48), it certainly did so in the Shishged Depression. Apart from being 'submitted to clan law' (Hamayon 1994: 83), then, the Darhad shamanist institutions were further submitted to the ecclesiastical laws of the Darhad Ih Shav', thus suggesting a double marginalization of shamans in the pre-revolutionary Shishged Depression. Still, shamanism represented a vital role in social life, even during the heyday of the Darhad Ih Shav'. Zhamtsarano, who visited the Darhads in the late 1920's, observed that they had 'a blossoming monastery with more than 1000 *lamas*', but also that, at the same time, shamanism was 'widely practised' (1979: 16).

Today, the situation is very different. Gone are the 'more than 1000 *lamas*', and the Shishged region is home only to a small number of shamans. This should come as no surprise, for the Communist cadres went to extreme measures to ensure that all religious 'superstition' was eliminated from Mongolian society (see e.g. Bawden 1986: 328–80). Still, Darhad shamanism did not suffer a fatal blow during Communism. In the Ulaan-Uul district, for instance, one could find all the aforementioned traditional specialists, whose perceived occult abilities were intertwined with the ideological practises of state-socialism in the most complex of ways. The blacksmiths represent a case in point. On the one hand, these blacksmiths were publicly heralded by state officials as the perfect exemplars of an 'inalienated mode of production', while, on the other hand, the same people simultaneously were able maintain an unofficial reputation within the community as persons imbued with extraordinary abilities. Shamans, however, were forced to practise 'very secretly' (*ih nuuts*) in order not to face severe repercussions. Still, I was told, shamanist ceremonies were performed throughout the Communist period, just as shamans regularly were consulted for divinatory purposes (which do not always require a shamanist proper séance).

With Mongolia's democratic reforms it became possible to practise religion openly again. Unfortunately, people now complain, many religious things were forgotten during the Communist period. To most Darhads, the brother part of this religious loss seems to involve Buddhism, but also 'shamanism' (*böö mörgöl*) is a subject of concern. There are not enough shamans around, people explain, and these shamans are not as capable (*chadaltai*) as shamans were back in the 'old times' (*deer üid*), or, even worse, they are 'fake shamans' (*hudal böö*), meaning that they do not know what they are doing and/or are only after peoples' money. All this being said, ideas as well as practises associated with shamanism do figure prominently in today's Shishged Depression, and the full range of traditional Mongolian specialists do operate in its three districts, although the shaman population largely is confined to the Tsagaan Nuur district, which has recently achieved the nationwide reputation of a shamanic stronghold.

In what way do these specialists stand out from other persons? Let me address this question by focusing on Ulaan-Uul's blacksmiths. Perhaps a half dozen of people are known as blacksmiths (*darhan*) in this community. All of them, though to different extents, are considered to have abilities/powers (*hüch chadal*) beyond the reach of ordinary persons. Apart from being seen to differ from other people, the blacksmiths are also perceived to differ from one another. At least two of Ulaan-Uul's blacksmiths are thus known to be diviners (*meregch*). These do, however, use different divinatory techniques, one 'stone-shuffling' (*chuluu tatah*) and the other scapulomancy (*dal shataah*), and there is much disagreement, not only about who is the better diviner, but also about which divinatory technique is better able to solicit what solutions. Several of Ulaan-Uul's blacksmiths are also skilled hunters. Once again, however, the abilities/knowledge of the one specialist do not correspond to the abilities/knowledge of the other; indeed, there is much contradiction between the different extraordinary knowledge held by individual hunters. If, for example, it is considered taboo to hunt female deer in one *taiga* area according to one hunter, then, according to another, there is no particular problem about that, but you *really* have to watch out for *ongod* (shamanic spirits) when you go hunting in another area – and so forth.

What kind of persons are the Shishged specialists? Put briefly, the shamans are both men and women, as are also the diviners; while the hunters, blacksmiths and bonesetters (*bariach*) are only men, and the midwives (*eh barigch*) only women. In ethnic terms, all specialists are either Darhad or Tsaatang. As opposed to many leaders in the Shishged region (see below), age does not seem to play a decisive role in the constitution of specialists' prominence. What first of all matter is how effective each specialist is at putting his or her unique knowledge into use. For example, one female shaman proudly claimed to be the only shaman in Mongolia who knows how to divine with money bills. Or, as a Buryat

Mongolian saying goes, '*'böö böögiin böölöh ondoo*', literally meaning that every shaman shamanises differently from every other' (Buyandelger (1999: 227).

In the Shishged Depression, then, 'different kinds of occult ability [are] related to different kinds of religious knowledge' (Humphrey 1996: 51). As we have seen, however, this occult division of labour is not only a question of a perceived differentiation between specialist persons, it is also a matter of a perceived differentiation within them. A Shishged specialist, I therefore suggest – by borrowing a term from Godelier's influential work on great men in Melanesia (1986) – can be conceived of as 'non-equivalent' with other persons, since he or she is not perceived to be commensurable with others, not with ordinary people, nor with other specialists.

As if to emphasise this internal diversity, Ulaan-Uul's blacksmiths tend to live scattered at the outskirts of the district centre, usually at the fringe of the *taiga*. This residence pattern seems to be characteristic of the Shishged specialists as a whole. The specialists do not belong in the district centres, it seems, for it is usually the ordinary people from the villages who tend to visit them, rather than the other way around[5]. This is not to say that the Shishged specialists do not move. It is only to say that specialists do not tend to move inwards towards the district centres (and the steppe zone as a whole), but rather tend to move outwards towards the *taiga*; not least the hunters and the shamans, for whom the *taiga* represents a unique domain of activity (Dulam & Even 1994; cf. Hamayon 1990).

In other words, one can posit a *totemic* relationship between the Shishged *taiga* landscape and the Shishged specialists (see also Pedersen 2001). The Shishged specialists are perceived to stand out from other people (as well as one another) in much the same way as the Shishged *taiga* zone is perceived to stand out from the Shishged steppe zone, which is where the ordinary people live and carry out their daily tasks. This observation is precisely what lies behind my notion of marginal prominence, for the Shishged Darhad specialists clearly are not only marginalized in the sociological (figurative) sense of the word, they are also marginalised in the topographical (literal) sense of the word.

These findings have important practical and cosmological implications. To give one example. Given that the spatial trajectories of Shishged shamans are so intimately correlated with the *taiga* environment, it is not surprising that there is widespread local scepticism about those Darhad shamans who have established themselves in Ulaanbaatar over the last decade or so. Clearly, the local authority of these 'fake shamans' suffers from the fact that they are not embedded in the *taiga* environment in same literal manner as their local competitors. The latter, conversely, enjoy high authority even among those devoted clients who come to visit them from outside the Shishged Depression, and to whom the marginal residence of these shamans only represents a proof of their status as 'genuine' (*jinhene*) specialists. Ulaanbaatar's Darhad shamans, therefore, seem forced into to construing different, and very possibly less localised, cosmological images in order to compensate for their lack of marginal spatial embeddedness. Indeed, from what limited information I have gathered about these urban shamans, this seems to be very much the case (cf. Merli 2000; see also the article by Merli in this volume).

The above example illustrates how the successful reproduction of a particular kind of social prominence is dependent on a particular form of spatial embeddedness. Or to put it differently: a successful specialist is a person who inhabits the Shishged landscape in a certain (marginal) way. The question now is: can the same be said for the variety of contemporary Shishged leaders?

Centred Leaders

In pre-revolutionary times the asymmetrical patron-client relationships characterized the relationship between many households in the Darhad Ih Shav' (see e.g. Sandschejew 1930: 31–33). The sources confirm that the secular *otog* leaders (*otogyn darga*)[6] of the Ih Shav' not only were wealthy, but also were of senior age, and male (cf. Badamhatan 1986: 80, 127; Sandschejew 1930: 28). More generally, Sandschejew (1930: 36) observed that male elders played 'a leading role' in their households, and that they were considered 'very important'. However, unlike for instance in the Daur case, male elders apparently did not play any significant religious role *as* elders in the Darhad Ih Shav's *ovoo* ceremonies, for, as in many other places in Manchu Mongolia, a different category of persons had taken control of these communal rituals, namely the Buddhist *lamas* (see also note 8).

How did the above leader statuses fare under Communism? The wealthy patrons were, of course, stripped of their wealth, and this particular status had no avenue of power within the micro-political framework of the planned economy. The traditional Mongolian age hierarchy was, however, reluctantly tolerated, but only inasmuch as it remained subsumed under the formal ranks of the party apparatus. In the Ulaan-Uul *negdel*, for example, each dairy farm (*ferm*) was headed by experienced senior herdsmen known as the *ahlagch* ('the oldest'). The *ahlagchs*' domain of power was significantly curtailed, however, for they received orders from the *negdel* leadership when it came to all bigger decisions concerning the *ferm*. More generally, the *a priori* status conventionally ascribed to age was severely curbed during Communism, for the introduction of universal education ensured that the party machine could enrol a generation of young leaders, including women, brought up in the ways of Communism.

So, while traditional pastoralist skills continued to be appreciated throughout the Communist period, the positions of large-scale decision-making were fully in the hands of the party, whether in the form of administrators in the *negdel* system (e.g. vets, biologists, managers), or in the form of professionals in the overlapping government framework of the district (e.g. accountants, doctors, teachers). The *ahlagch* aside, the only official statuses available to elders *as elders* seem to have been 'folkloristic' ones, such as 'folk singer' (*duuchin*) and 'story teller' (*ülgerch*).

Today, a range of 'leaders' (*darga*, pl. *darguud*) can be found in the Ulaan-Uul community. On the one hand, there are those holding official positions resembling the ones mentioned above, i.e. professionals of various sorts (doctors, senior teachers, accountants etc.); many of whom also occupy top political and administrative jobs on the district level (e.g. that of district governor, *sumyn darga*, and chief district administrator, *zasgiin darga*). On the other hand, there is a range of more novel and/or informal types of leaders, of whom we may single out three distinct kinds.

First, there are the *bag* leaders (*bagyn darga*), of whom there are six in the Ulaan-Uul district, one for each *bag* (i.e. sub-district). The district governor formally appoints each bag leader, but the governor follows the proposal put forward by the locally elected *bag* council (*bagyn hural*) (cf. Enkhbat 1993: 8–10). In certain ways, the *bag* leader office can be compared to that of the pre-revolutionary *otog* leader (see note 7), with the *bag* leader being responsible for the twice-annual livestock count (*malyn too*) and other forms of local data-collection; for the ongoing collection of tax; and for the organisation of various communal tasks on the *bag* level (1993: 9; see also Enkhbat & Odgaard 1996: 180–183). In fact, the *bag* leaders are comparable to the old *otog* leaders on a more informal level as well, for they clearly play the role of prominent 'masters' (*ezen*, pl. *ezed*) in their local communities. Ulaan-Uul's five rural *bag* leaders are all fulltime pastoralists, who are not only reputed herdsmen (*sain malchin*) and known to be hard working (*ih ajilsag hün*), but who are also elder males with large households as well as herds of livestock, some of which is 'leased' (*süreg tavih*) to poorer pastoral households, precisely as was the case during the pre-revolutionary period (Badamhatan 1986; see also Humphrey and Sneath 1999: 143–47).

The *bag* leaders play the role of traditional patrons in their local communities, and their appointment clearly is contingent on this, though it should be noted that the *bag* leaders also are held to 'be good with numbers' (*too sain medne*), and, more generally, to be capable and trustworthy when it comes to their administrative tasks. Yet, it would be quite wrong to say that the abilities of the *bag* leaders are understood to be exceptional; in fact, if Ulaan Uul's *bag* leaders seem to have one outstanding characteristic, then it is that none of them are perceived to be extraordinary persons.

The second category of new leaders is the 'eldest men' (*hamgiin ahl övgön*), who, above all, play an important role in Ulaan-Uul's annual *ovoo* ceremonies[7]. Given their designation, it is evident that these leaders must personify the essence of 'the old man', rather like the *bagchi* did in pre-revolutionary Daur society. Unlike the latter, however, Ulaan-Uul's eldest men are not understood to be imbued with outstanding ritual or oratorical skills. Rather, the prominence of the 'eldest men' boils down to them being just that: old Darhad men. I shall return to this question below, and here should only note that most of the 'eldest men' are living in the Shishged countryside as fulltime pastoralists.

The third type of new Shishged leaders is the 'business persons' (*naimaachin*, pl. *naimaachid*): an increasingly important class of shopkeepers, jeep and truck owners, and other people engaged in trading (*naimaa hiideg*) on a regular basis. All the business persons are rumoured to be very wealthy, and I was often told that, 'soon, the business persons will be running everything around here'. Yet, while jealousy is rampant, the personhood of business persons is not frowned upon in the Ulaan-Uul community: Frowned upon is rather the perceived immorality and injustice of the market economy *as such* (see also Humphrey & Mandel 2002). Invariably, business persons are thus spoken of as 'smart' (*uhaantai*), (also) as 'good with numbers', and, above all, as 'well-connected' (*tanil ihtei*). In point of fact, many business persons did hold leading offices during Communism, and they are now taking advantage of their old networks, just as some of their most valuable assets (e.g. buildings, jeeps) were acquired through often shady transactions during the de-collectivization period of the early 1990's (see also Potkanski 1993).

Interestingly, a relatively high number of the Shishged business persons are women. It is characteristic that their trading activities tend to be concentrated around the Shishged district centres and the provincial capital. Unlike their male peers, the businesswomen seldom travel around on horseback or motorcycle in the Shishged countryside for trading purposes. As elsewhere in rural Mongolia, this 'steppe trade' is deeply immersed in local networks of social obligation (cf. Sneath 1993), one outcome of which is that money tends to be devalued as a suitable medium for these transactions. Instead, Shishged businessmen involved in 'steppe-trade' tend to conduct their *naimaa* in kind, either in the form of immediate barter transactions (swapping, say, clothes for butter), or in the form of more prolonged exchange arrangements with no obvious tally involved, arrangements involving goods as well as services (like, say, constant access to fresh milk during winter). Like their male peers, the businesswomen tend to be based in the district centre, where they usually run shops together with their husbands. Rather than travelling to and from the countryside, however, the businesswomen's occasional travelling takes them to Mörön, where they engage in more impersonal and monetarized transactions at the sprawling provincial market (*zah*).

The Shishged Depression is characterised by a gendered distribution of trade practises. While the male traders tend to engage in socially embedded economic transactions confined to the Shishged environment, the female traders tend to move beyond this local realm in order to conduct more disembedded transactions with relative strangers from outside the Shishged region.

One noteworthy pattern is a growing disjuncture between age and wealth as avenues of micro-political power. If, in the pre-revolutionary Shishged Depression, seniority and wealth were largely connected, then, in the post-socialist Shishged Depression, these avenues of power are pointing in two temporal directions, so to speak, one leading back into the past (viz. the 'old man'), and the other leading into the future (viz. the 'businessperson'). The emergence of this temporal disjuncture can be explained in light of, not just the advent of market economy in Mongolia (i.e. 'the future'), but also the apparent resurgence of the pre-revolutionary social order (i.e. 'the past') which has unfolded from within the domestic sphere (see Kandiyoti 2002). From an anthropological point of view the 'eldest men' are as novel in the Shishged Depression as are the 'businesspersons'. Neither political type has figured in its current form before, for, just as few ritual functions apparently were allocated to male elders *as* elders in Darhad Ih Shav' (cf. above), nor was the area home to any significant population of indigenous businesspersons back then (as elsewhere in Manchu Mongolia, trading in the Darhad Ih Shav' was monopolised by Chinese and Russian traders, cf. Badamhatan 1980: 13–24; Pürev 1980: 46–48). Yet, from a Darhad point of view, the 'eldest men' are explicitly associated with the past, namely with what now is understood to be the morally superior age preceding Communism, while the 'businesspersons' are associated with an immoral 'age of the market' (*zah zeeliin üye*) on the wake.

One effect of this temporal disjuncture, I suggest, is the particular distribution of leadership which can be observed today, where some leaders are prominent only by virtue of being old males (i.e. the eldest men); other leaders are prominent by virtue of being wealthy patrons in a manner closely resembling pre-revolutionary times (i.e. the *bag* leaders), while other leaders again are prominent only by virtue of being wealthy (i.e. the businesspersons). Paraphrasing Strathern (1991: 197), each type of leader 'seems an epitome, a concentration of characteristics, making visible what other [persons] might be; he [or she] therefore stands out'. In other words: the different types of Shishged leaders are not conceived of as 'more similar' to the same others. If the eldest men seem to be conceived of as more similar to the relatively limited category of senior Darhad men, the businesspersons are conceived of as more similar to a much broader category of others, namely virtually all adults, women and non-Darhads included. I therefore suggest that the centred prominence of Shishged leaders inheres in their capacity to appear more 'equivalent' to certain categories of other persons (Godelier 1986), as opposed to the case of the Shishged specialists, whose marginal prominence, as earlier suggested, seems to reside in the qualitatively different notion of non-equivalence with *all* other persons.

Nomadic and Sedentary Topographies

In what remains of this article I want to show that the aforementioned temporal disjuncture between different leaders corresponds to a topographical disjuncture as well. I propose to distinguish between different leaders with respect to their mode of centring within the Shishged environment. The eldest men, I suggest, are prominent by virtue of personifying an 'absolute centre' that corresponds to the nomadic topography of the Shishged steppe zone, where the businesspersons are prominent by virtue of personifying a 'relative centre' which corresponds to the sedentary topography of the Mongolian nation state.

As a rule, old Darhad men tend to remain within their yurts (*ger)* and to move very little around. Indeed, old men are supposed to be kinetically inferior to other persons, since, according to 'custom' (*yos*), their bodily composures and techniques of movement (when horse-riding, for example) should reflect their advanced age (see Lacaze 2000).[8] As such, the (ideal) old Darhad man in his bodily appearance corresponds to the mountains that the Shishged Depression *ovoo* rites (among other things) aim to celebrate. Like mountains, ideal old men are still, they are the epitomes of solidity, and they constitute focal points in whose vicinity human as well as nonhuman life-forms are supposed to gather (cf. Humphrey 1996).

This ideological motionlessness of the old men can be contrasted with the specialists, who, as previously observed, tend to move along marginal rather than centred trajectories; but it can also be contrasted with the businesspersons and the *bag* leaders. In particular, the spatial movements of hunters and businesspersons represent asymmetrical inversions of one another. Whereas, from the point of view of the steppe zone, hunters move along outward trajectories which disperse into the *taiga*, businesspersons move along inward trajectories which gather in the district centres and, further on, in the provincial capital of Mörön.

The old men, on their side, do not tap into either trajectory, but tend to remain inside their *gers* waiting for people to visit them, being the human 'mountains' who do not move.

This is not to say that old Darhad men are not subject to spatial movements: after all, many of them are nomads. But the point is that these nomadic movements take place within a qualitatively different co-ordinate system than that delineated by the Shishged district centres. From a nomadic point of view, the Shishged steppe zone is thus comprised of a grid of different centres, some of which are moving (the pastoral households), others of which are still (the ritual cairns). The movements of the nomadic centres are far from random. Like most nomads, Shishged pastoralists tend to follow the same migration routes, and to use to same campsites, from year to year (for details, see Badamhatan 1986: 68–86; Harper 1998). Indeed, one can conceive of the annual Darhad migrations as symbolic anti-movements, for these involve various ritualised actions that instantiate centred fixed points of perception along the way, just as the packing and unpacking of the nomadic dwelling is carried out in accordance to highly standardised routines (Pedersen 2003; see also Humphrey 1995).

In ideal terms, then, the Shishged nomadic landscape exists independently from the Shishged districts (and from other administrative units), for this nomadic topography is defined by a type of centres, which are entirely differently constituted from the centres of the modern Mongolian nation state. On the one hand, we have various nomadic centres (old men, *gers, ovoos*), most of which are moving and yet absolute of nature. On the other hand, we have a range of sedentary centres (villages, towns), which are standing still and yet are relative of nature. Deleuze & Guattari, in their famous essay on 'Nomadology', reach a similar conclusion:

It is false to define the nomad by movement. Toynbee is profoundly right to suggest that the nomad is on the contrary *he who does not move*..[..]..Nomad space is localized and not delimited. What is both limited and limiting is striated space, the *relative global*: it is delimited in its parts which are assigned constant directions, are oriented in relation to one another, divisible by boundaries. Even when the nomad sustains its effects, he does not belong to this relative global, where one passes from one point to another, from one region to another. Rather, he is in a *local absolute*, an absolute that is manifested locally (1999: 381–82; emphases original).

> Returning now to the business persons, it is clear that they personify a centre qualitatively different from the old men. If the old man in his *ger* embodies the nomadic landscape in the form of a 'local absolute', then, still following Deleuze & Guattari, the businessperson rather embodies the sedentary landscape in

> the form of a 'relative global', for the businessperson is clearly 'oriented in relation to' the district and provincial centres to and from which he or she moves. So, if the old Darhad men are personifications of one kind of centre, then the Shishged businesspersons are personifications of another kind; and these two centres correspond to the nomadic topography defined by the Shishged steppe zone, and to the sedentary topography defined by the modern Mongolian nation state, respectively.

Arguably, this topographical contrast is also reflected in the Mongolian language. The two terms *gol* and *töv*, while synonymous in the broad meaning of 'centre', nonetheless seem to denote two distinct concepts of what is a centre is. The term *gol* is used to denote a *ger's* hearth (*gal golomt*)[9], but it is also used to denote a range of other *intrinsically centred* phenomena, such as an 'aorta' (*gol sudas*), the 'heartwood of a tree' (*modyn gol*), the 'axle of a wagon' (*tergenii gol*); as well as, more metaphorically, a 'moral imperative' (*gol yos*) and the 'pillar of a community' (*gol bagana*, lit. 'central pillar'). While there certainly are overlaps between the two semantic sets, the term *töv* is often employed with quite different connotations. I am thinking of such *extrinsically centred* phenomena as the 'Central Province' (*Töv Aimag*), a 'district centre' (*sumyn töv*), a 'central post-office' (*töv shuudan*); as well as, more metaphorically, 'centralism' (*tövlön unirdah yos*), something 'orthodox' (*töv*), and 'to have balanced feeling-thoughts' (*töv sanaatai*) (cf. Hangin et. al. 1986; see also Sneath 2000: 144).

What we have, then, are two distinct notions of what a centre is, and these seem to correspond to the topographical contrast pointed out above. On the one hand, we have an absolute concept of a centre – *gol* – which is used is to denote phenomena that exist in the form of 'local absolutes' (a hearth; a tree; a moral injunction). And, on the other hand, we have a relative concept of a centre – *töv* – that is used to denote phenomena that exist in the form of 'global relatives' (a constellation of administrative districts; a psychological range of 'feeling-thoughts'). *Gol*, then, seems to convey an idea of an absolute centring, while *töv* seems to convey an idea of a relative centring. Or, one could also say, if the social prominence of the eldest men is *gol*-like, then the social prominence of the businesspersons seems to be more *töv*-like.

Evidently, the above observations regarding the old man and the businessperson represent ideal versions of how the prominence of different leaders is embedded in the Shishged environment. Many old men are, for example, not fulltime nomads. Likewise, many Shishged businesspersons are senior men, who, although not living as fulltime nomads, own significant herds of livestock in whose breeding they and their households participate during the summer period. But these qualifications do not destroy the case, which I have put forward. The suggested differences are real ones, and the two kinds of spatial embodiment described above can easily be distinguished from one another at the level of social practice. Certain prominent persons clearly stand out in a predominantly *gol*-like manner, others clearly in a predominantly *töv*-like manner, hence delineating an analytical plane onto which the spatial distribution of Shishged leadership can be plotted.

The *bag* leader occupies a middle position on this plane. Inasmuch as the he travels around performing his administrative tasks, he taps into the relative centring defined by the sedentary topography, but inasmuch as he is a prominent patron in his rural neighbourhood, he taps into the absolute centring defined by the nomadic topography. The *bag* leader has one foot planted in each centre, so to speak, with the one leg resting in the *gol* (viz. the *ger*) and the other in the *töv* (viz. the district centre), and his prominence clearly is a function of his ability to personify both kinds of centres at the same time, as it were. Indeed, there (still) seems to be an important overlap between these two kinds of centring in Shishged social life, not unlike the way in which *töv* and *gol* are synonymous in their broad meaning of 'centre'. Clearly, the majority of contemporary Shishged leaders are centred in both ways: They are both personifications of the local absolute (i.e. play the role of patrons in the nomadic landscape) and are personifications of the global relative (i.e. are prominently aligned to the sedentary topography of the Mongolian nation state).

One can, however, single out certain leaders who are centred only in one of the two senses. First, there are the female leaders, who can be said to be centred only in the relative sense, and to whom I shall return below. Second, there are the aforementioned 'eldest men', who can be said to be centred only in the absolute sense. Let me now substantiate this point by considering the annual *ovoo* ceremony at the Öliin Davaa mountain pass, home to the most important *ovoo* in the Shishged Depression.

Absolute Centres

The *ovoo* ceremony held at the Öliin Davaa is the largest communal ritual in the Ulaan-Uul district. Around 500 people participate in the event. Like most *ovoo* rites in Mongolia today, the Öliin Davaa ceremony takes place at the height of the summer (usually close to the Independence Day on 11th July), and, also like most other *ovoo* ceremonies, the religious events at the Öliin Davaa are proceeded by a big game celebration (*naadam*) held outside the Ulaan-Uul district centre. Ulaan-Uul's leaders are eager to participate in the *ovoo* ritual, for it is considered very important to the well being of the community, given that its objective is to successfully 'beckon' (*dallaga*) 'fortune' (*hishig*) from the local 'land masters' (*gazaryn ezed*) so that favourable weather conditions and healthy lives will be bestowed upon both humans and livestock for in coming year.

Rather than discussing in detail the Buddhisized liturgy of this ritual (see e.g. Bawden 1958; Heissig 1980), let me here focus on the particular role performed by the eldest men. I previously noted that the eldest men by no means can be described as religious or ritual specialists. Others kinds of prominent persons fulfil this role at the *ovoo* ceremony, notably a group of *lamas* invited for the occasion from the Mörön monastery. In fact, the eldest men hardly seem to be doing or saying anything special, apart from being physically present at the very heart of the ritual event. It is thus the eldest men who, upon their arrival to the *ovoo* site, are allocated a place at the midst of the ritual gathering. It is the eldest men, who, when the *lamas* have finished reading their holy sutras, are the first to circumambulate, very slowly, the *ovoo*, whilst making milk and vodka libations on behalf of the community. And it is the eldest men, who, seated amidst a constellation of other male leaders competing to take part in this symbolic gesture, cut up the sacrificial sheep into pieces and distribute the meat to every single person in the crowd, women and children included.

It is, I believe, of utmost importance that the eldest men always arrive at the *ovoo* site on their horses, dismount in a graceful and proper manner, and then walk, slowly but determinedly, towards the *ovoo*, where they sit down without uttering a single unnecessary word, let alone making a single unnecessary gesture. Indeed, these men always seem to be dressed in the same inconspicuous manner – dark blue *deels* (gowns), old-style herdsmen boots and traditional Darhad hats – and they always seem to carry themselves in the same, stout manner. The ritual function of the eldest men, I suggest, is to be a kind of human gestalt in whose image people can imagine themselves as absolutely centred within the nomadic landscape. In other words, these men seem to embody precisely what their inner quality is understood to be, namely a sort of human mountain in whose vicinity people are compelled to gather.

The eldest men, in other words, play the role of fathers of the Ulaan-Uul community as a whole; certainly, their ritual activities closely resemble those of the traditional 'household master' (*geriin ezen*) within the domestic sphere, especially in more formal contexts (such as weddings). Like the mobile *ger* with the immobile old man inside, then, the *ovoo* ceremony with the eldest men at its midst makes visible a certain (nomadic) vision of what the rural Mongolian social order ought to look like. More specifically, the eldest men seem to temporarily personify what the Öliin Davaa *ovoo* permanently is, namely the centre of the Ulaan-Uul community as a whole; and this a centre which, unlike the sedentary district centre, is an absolute one.

Relative Centres

Turning now to the female leaders, it is quite telling that there are no female *bag* leaders in the Shishged Depression. Indeed, if we leave aside the case of elder widows, then it is clear that women cannot embody the aforementioned nomadic absolute centre, since the traditional Mongolian kinship-property system ensures that women *as women* cannot figure as patriarchal patrons proper (see e.g. Vreeland 1962). In fact, female leader statuses in the Shishged Depression do seem to be more or less restricted to specifically sedentary/modern domains of social prominence, such as doctor, head teacher – and businesswoman. I will here concentrate on the latter, for the businesswomen seem to represent an extreme case of relative centring in contemporary Shishged social life.

I previously observed that, apart from working in their local shops, Ulaan-Uul's businesswomen move along spatial trajectories between the district centre and the provincial capital, where they conduct socially disembedded economic transactions at the Mörön market. Now consider the fact that the Mongolian term for market – *zah* – also means 'border', 'edge' and 'margin' (Hangin et. al. 1986). But what kind of margin is this? It is, partly following Wheeler (2004), not just the geographical margin of Mongolia's town and city centres (at whose outskirts the black markets tend to be situated). It is also a sort of *absolute margin*, namely the socially ambiguous position occupied by female traders from the patriarchal perspective of the motionless old men. My point is not only that, historically, many of Mongolia's markets were situated at the peripheries of the nomadic homelands, notably at the unstable frontier zones of Old Inner Asia (cf. Lattimore 1962). My point is also that one of the Mongolian terms for trade – *hudaldaa* – is etymologically linked to the relationship terminology used for male affines in traditional matrimonial contexts (namely *hud-*), hence suggesting a notion of transactions (in both goods and women) occurring across the absolute margin between two patrilineal units embedded in the nomadic landscape (cf. Park 1997: 89–91; Vreeland 1962; but see Hamayon 1990: 225).

The businesswomen, then, seem to be imbued with the diametrically opposite kind of social prominence to the eldest men. Paraphrasing Tsing (1995: 59), the businesswomen and the specialists 'have situated themselves differently in relation to marginality; but both are equally decentered'. For if the specialists stand out by being radically different from other persons, then the businesswomen rather seem to stand out by being the most similar to a certain category of others, namely all those persons – i.e. strangers – who are not incorporated into a local nomadic absolute (such as the people they trade with in Mörön). In that sense, the businesswomen represent, not only the external face of the Shishged Depression as it is seen by the outside world, but also the internal face of the outside world as it is seen from within the Shishged Depression (cf. Strathern 1991).

In fact, there is a clear sense to which businesswomen are amongst the least traditional in the Ulaan-Uul district. Their homes are deliberately made to look modern (as one woman proudly explained to me, 'I have tried to make our *ger* look *just like* a flat in Ulaanbaatar'). Similarly, the businesswomen take great pains to dress and behave in the manner (they imagine) 'modern women' in Ulaanbaatar do. And, unlike for instance the specialists, the businesswomen certainly do not speak with a strong Darhad accent. In fact, several of Ulaan-Uul's businesswomen are ethnically Halh, as they descent from the inflow of party-cadres who immigrated to the Shishged Depression during Communist times (see also Bulag 1998: 33).

The Shishged businesswomen, I suggest, embody a particular kind of spatial imaginary in which people can perceive themselves as relatively centred with respect to the modern Mongolian nation state (and, therefore, its Halh majority). In that sense, the businesswomen can be said to personify the sedentary qualities of what Deleuze and Guattari call 'the relative global', and this is a personification which, as I have shown, engenders distinct micro-political effects inasmuch as, more than any other kind of local leader, it is the spatial trajectories followed by these businesswomen which serve to open up the Shishged Depression towards the outside world.

Conclusion

I began this article by asking why the Shishged Darhads are not migrating wholesale to Ulaanbaatar. One aim of the subsequent survey has been to engage with this question by exploring certain ramifications of 'the centre' and 'the margin' in the construction of social prominence in the Shishged Depression. Contrary to what someone might expect, the sedentary centre represented by Ulaanbaatar seems to engender relatively little room for micro-political manoeuvring within post-socialist Shishged Darhad social life. For only certain kinds of leaders, in particular the businesswomen, are spatially embedded within the sedentary topography of the modern Mongolian nation-state. Other leaders, in particular the eldest men, are spatially embedded in a qualitatively different way, since the ongoing reproduction of their patriarchal status is contingent upon the nomadic landscape demarcated by the Shishged Depression itself. Indeed, from the perspective of these 'local absolutes', migrating to Ulaanbaatar seems to involve the ultimate separation from the centre of social life, not unlike what is assumed to happen to a young woman in the act of exogamous marriage.

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Notes

1 Fieldwork in the Shishged Depression was carried out from October 1995 to January 1996; from June 1998 to August 1999; and from June to August 2000. I thank the Danish Research Academy; King's College; the William Wyse Foundation; The Department of Ethnography and Social Anthropology, Aarhus University, Mindefondet; King Christian X's Foundation; and Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II and Prince Henrik's Foundation for financial support, which made this research possible.

2 According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census, the net migration from the Hövsgöl province in the period 1995–2000 was 5,337 (NSO 2000: 24). See also Figure 1 in Sneath's article in this volume.

3 From 1994 to 1998 the population of Ulaan-Uul Sum increased from 3396 to 3643, and Renchinlhümbe Sum underwent a similar development. Tsagaan Nuur Sum, the third and northernmost district of the Shishged Depression, has seen a population decrease over the same period, probably due to the crisis in the local reindeer economy and the scarcity of suitable pastureland for Mongolian pastoralism (see also Wheeler 2000).

4 In fact, it seems to be worse, cf. Sürenjav (1998). See also Sneath (2002) for further evidence on the degree of economic hardship in the Renchinlhümbe district.

5 Pegg (2001: 122) describes the Darhad shamaness Baljir Udgan's home as 'tucked away behind a barren, rocky slope close to the river Harmai'. Interestingly, Pegg also notes that this shaman 'used to visit other peoples' homes, but the spirits were offended. People now visit her' (2001: 132).

6 The *otog* was the ecclesiastical equivalent to the aristocratic banner (*hoshuu*). Around 1855, the Darhad Ih Shav' was organised into three *otogs*, known as the East, the West and the North *otog* respectively, each of which were administered by an *otog* leader with several officials under him (Badamhatan 1980: 26; cf. Legrand 1976: 81–82; Vreeland 1962: 11–23).

7 A typical *ovoo* consists of a cairn of stones to which people (ideally) must add new stones every time they pass by, while making clockwise circumambulations of it. *Ovoos* are usually constructed at places – such as mountain passes – considered genius loci of 'land masters' (*gazaryn ezed*), i.e. the spiritual entities held responsible for the general conditions (rainfall, diseases, fertility etc.) upon which human and animal life depend

(see also Heissig 1980: 103–105). *Ovoos* traditionally were bound up with the reproduction of different residential groupings, whose male members performed sacrificial rites (*ovoony tahilga*) at their local *ovoo* site. In Manchu Mongolia, the religious responsibility for these ceremonies often was transferred to the Buddhist church, whose *lamas* would read out sutra prayers designed to ensure the blessing from the 'land masters'. During Communism, the *ovoo* institution lost most of its politico-religious salience. The party explained the *ovoos* by their usefulness as road markers; something, which, while not exactly wrong, ignored previous interconnections between land, spirits, domestic animals and residential groupings. Today, the *ovoo* institution is being re-invigorated across Mongolia. Typically, this occurs with reference, not to patri-local communities, but to the lower levels of post-socialist Mongolia's administrative make-up, i.e. the district (*sum*) and the sub-district (*bag*) (see also Humphrey & Sneath 1999: 123–27).

8 This etymological link must be considered uncertain (Nasanbayar, personal communication). It also should be emphasised that the term *gol* at the same time refers to a quite different semantic register involving meanings such as flow and life (*gol*, for example, is the common term used for rivers). Indeed, it would appear that, for something to have a *gol*-like quality, it must fulfil both the criteria of being 'central' and the criteria of being 'alive' (Hangin et. al. 1986).

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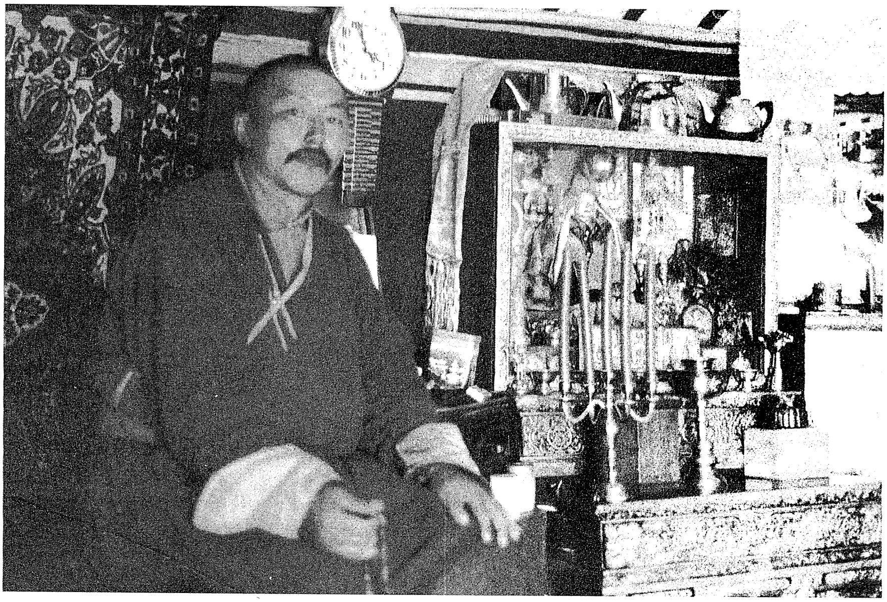
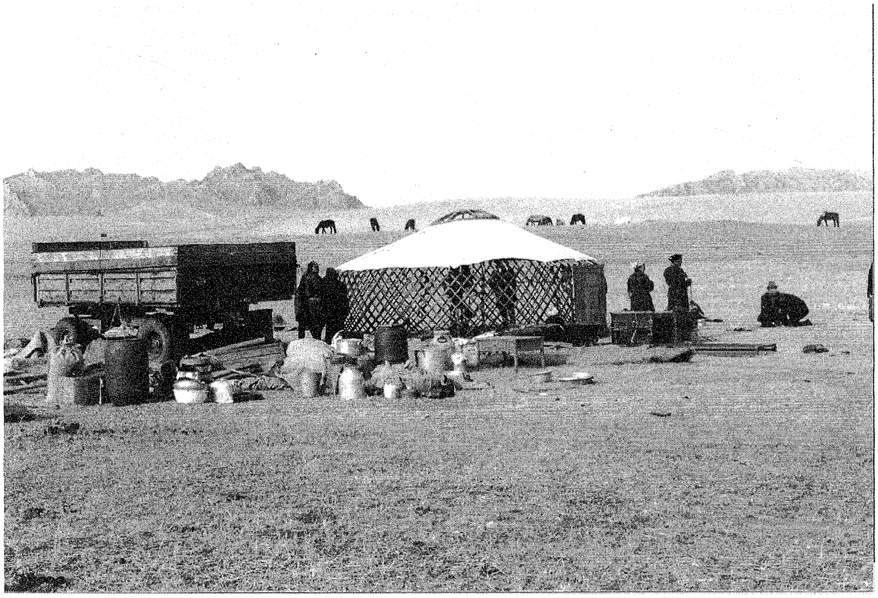
Herder children in Arkhangai, central Mongolia *(photo Ole Bruun).*

(above) A guest from Tibet in a rural temple *(photo Ole Bruun).*

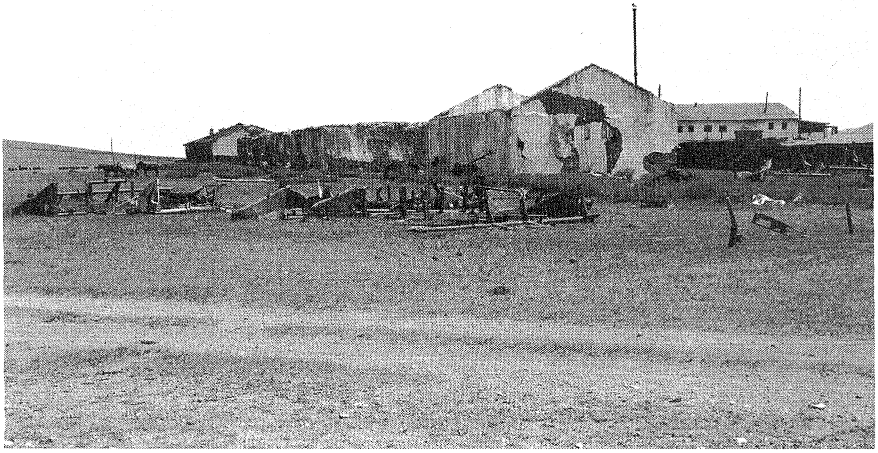
(below) A rural lama in his mobile ger-temple *(photo Ole Bruun).*

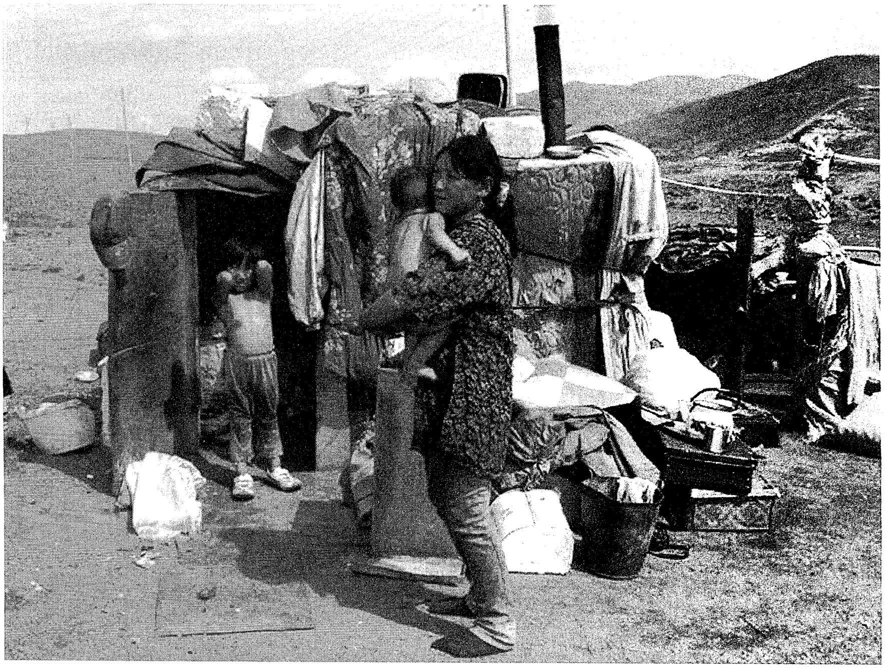




(above) A ger being reassembled after the move to new pasture, central Mongolia *(photo Ole Bruun).*

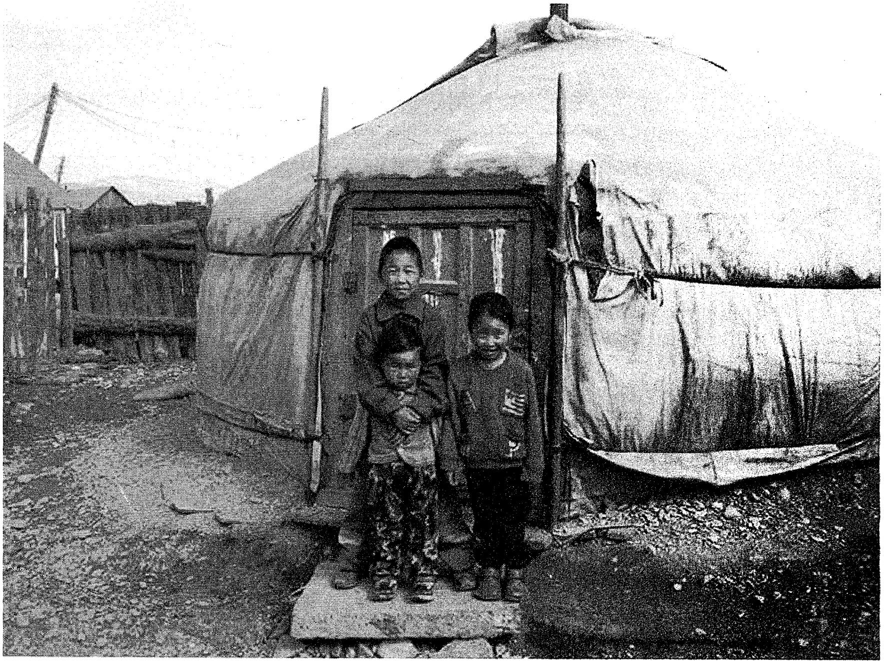
(below) An abandoned agricultural collective, central Mongolia *(photo Ole Bruun).*

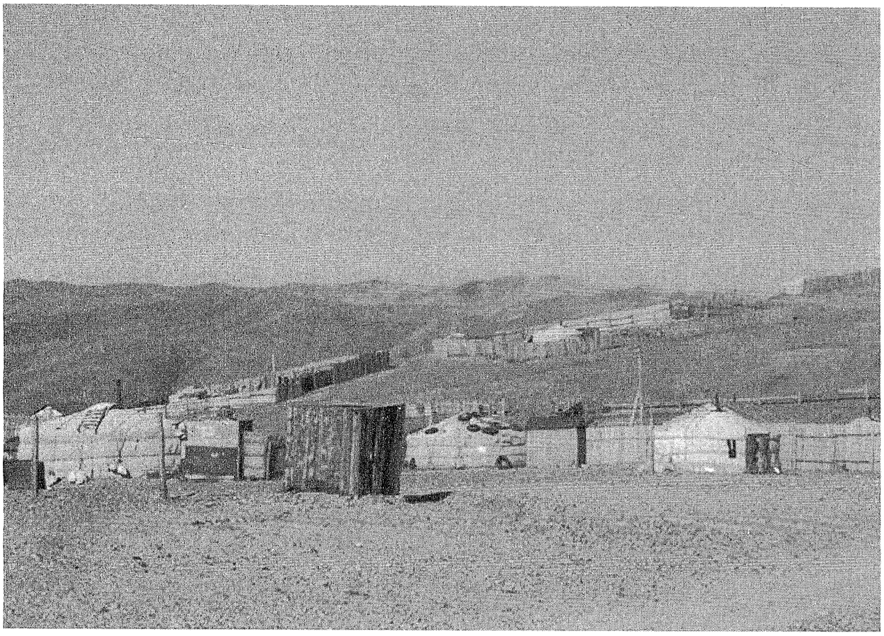




(above) Migrant family living on dump site outside Ulaanbaatar *(photo Ann Benwell).*

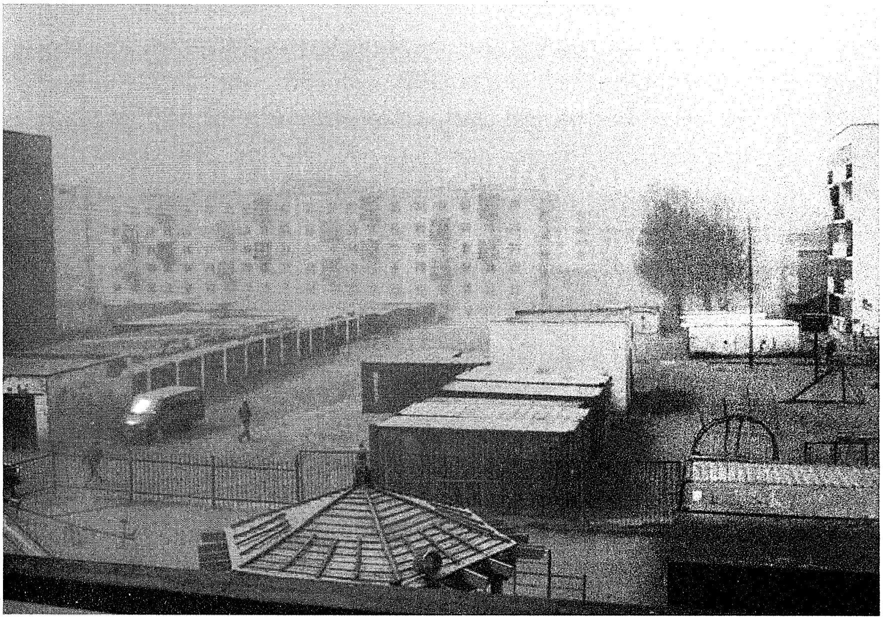
(below) Home alone: children in a ger district in Ulaanbaatar *(photo Ann Benwell).*





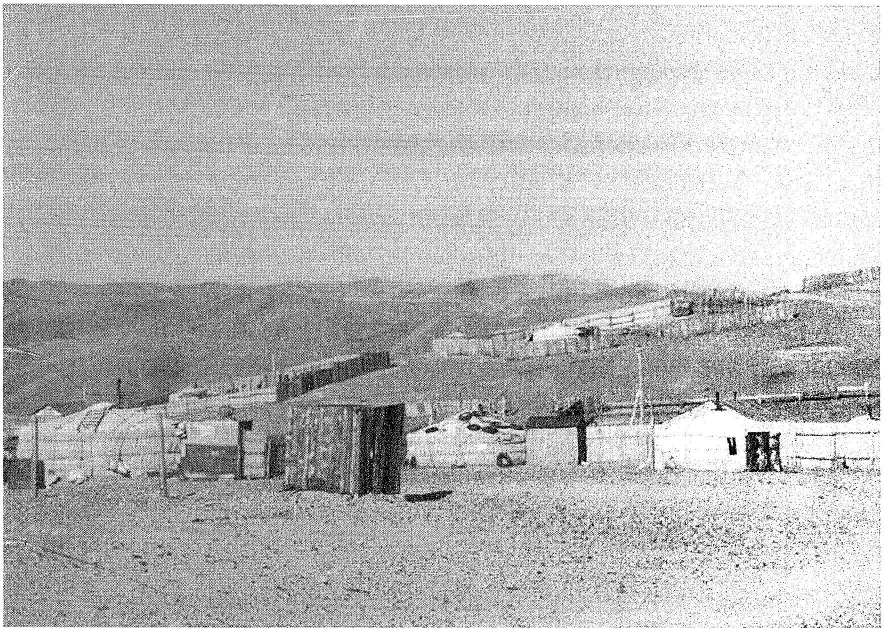
(above) Many migrants settle in new ger districts outside the capital *(photo Ann Benwell).*

(below) Traffic jam: most of Mongolia's private cars are concentrated in the capital *(photo Ann Benwell).*



(above) Dust storm over a common residential area in Ulaanbaatar (note Russian-style apartment blocks). Containers are used as garages for private cars as nothing can be left unprotected at night *(photo Ann Benwell).*

(below) View over an old 'ger-district' in Ulaanbaatar: many families have small wooden houses and gers, but tend to live in the gers in winter because they are easier to heat *(photo Ann Benwell).*



5

Facing Gender Challenges in Post-Socialist Mongolia

Ann Fenger Benwell

This chapter addresses women's position in Mongolia today, both in the family and in society in general. With the shift from command to market economy in 1990 many Mongolians express that society has become far more volatile. Gender roles, i.e. the tasks and decision-making undertaken by women and men respectively, seem to have lost much of the relative predictability of the pre-socialist and socialist periods. The chapter examines recent changes in women's position in the context of these radical socio-political changes, which have resulted in escalating rural-to-urban migration, altered social relations, and poverty, and thus posed challenges to both sexes. Mongolian women are increasingly dominant in education and in many professions. They hold a growing number of middle range and higher positions in the state and private sectors and among all social strata women are increasingly becoming family breadwinners. At another level, however, an increasing number of women are poor. Similarly, more women are reported to be victims of domestic violence and crime.

The Mongolian experience offers recent and radical changes in a society that outwardly seemed to have fixed and mutually accepted gender roles. The chapter will consider how Mongolian culture and history has contributed to shaping gender relations today, for example, in terms of changes encountered by pastoral women who break up and move into the city. It will examine aspects of modern society with bearings on gender relations. Evidently, new social relations are developing in the face of the modern society's social and economic unpredictability.

Migration and Gender Positions

The post-socialist period was entered with a strong resentment towards the Russian influence and with excitement to enter the Western world, appearing free and within reach, first and foremost in urban settings. However, excitement turned to disappointment as prosperous development for all did not 'happen'. Initially, all state industries and public services in both rural and urban areas came to a halt or struggled to uphold a minimum of services, for instance hospitals and schools. Unemployment surged for both women and men and there was no food to buy or sell; imports from Russia, the almost exclusive trade partner to Mongolia, fell dramatically. The usual sale of animal products (meat, milk, cheese and hides) from the state livestock cooperatives, the *negdel*s, was halted; there was no petrol to transport goods to the urban centres, where customers had no money to buy with anyhow – and no manufactured products went the opposite direction. In the countryside, pastoral families survived on produce from animals that had been given to them from the *negdel*s in the privatization process.

The lack of goods in the urban centres and the return to a subsistence economy in rural areas caused a dramatic family migration from city to country during 1990–1993. Numerous urban families chose to settle in the areas of their parents or grandparents and were given as many animals as relatives could afford in order to start their own herds. Although many of the new herders had spent time with herding relatives, they were inexperienced in husbandry skills i.e. locating pastures, and using animal products for food and goods; skills that were sometimes also difficult for the experienced herders who for the past one or two generations had become dependent on the services of the *negdel*. The *hot ail* regained socio-economic importance equivalent to the functions before the socialist period. Here usually family groups created temporary units of 2–10 *ger*s (the Mongolian felt tent) and cooperated on livestock management mainly for economic reasons. In the *hot ail* households divide the tasks of herding between the larger group, providing a kind of social safety net for poor herders who connect to wealthy families or relatives (Vreeland 1953: 34–35, Szynkiewicz 1982: 16–18, Bold 2001: 68–75). During these first years of transition rural and urban Mongolia proved to be closely related and Mongolians acknowledged with pride a shared identity as part of a society based on pastoralism. From 1993 onwards, supplies slowly found their way to Mongolia through traders and a growing number of small-scale entrepreneurs – and the strangest items could be found at markets for a short period of time and never found again. The dependency of urban centres on rural products decreased as it was substituted by foreign assistance, the flow of migration turned from urban-to-rural to rural-to-urban in the mid-1990s, and an intellectual divide grew between country and city as the city held new socio-economic opportunities and, for instance, developed new gender positions that are, however, based on pastoral influences.

The structural position of women in Mongolian society is influenced by a socialist legacy of women's rights to work, to make decisions, to participate in the public spheres, and to have children – the system provided the social networks for this through maternity leave and pensions. However, today government allowances (maternity leave and pensions for the elderly and disabled) have been eroded by inflation, increasing women's dependence on an income to be able to care and provide for their families. Many women feel that they have to stay at home in order to look after infants, the handicapped and the elderly. This choice is not an available option when there is no sufficient household income. In such cases, women have to leave the house to trade, beg or take whatever work they can get. The consequences for family members are catastrophic and tragic for the children who are left at home, often tied to a bed for hours in order to prevent them from leaving the *ger* or burning themselves on the stove that in the winter is stoked with enough fuel to keep a fire burning; a practice that every year results in fires and casualties. Children in families that cannot afford to send them to kindergarten or school after state subsidies have been cut or withdrawn often beg or steal.

In the countryside, although the traditional perception of males being the main breadwinners remains unchanged in many ways, herding women often manage household tasks and income generation. Many men are pressured by the unremitting responsibility of animals and the hardship of life, exacerbated after the consecutive years of extremely harsh ice and snow-winters (*zud*), and find relief in alcohol. Rural women and men – usually the younger ones – see possibilities in migration. However, the opportunities of newcomers from the countryside are complex and unpredictable and there is a noticable gender difference. For example, in Ulaanbaatar, data for 1998 reveal that 44 per cent of women are poor compared to 'only' 21 per cent of men. In *sum*s the number for women is 52 per cent against 28 per cent for men; and in the remote rural areas the proportion of men who are poor is 25.2 per cent compared to 23.6 per cent for women (HDR-Mongolia 2003: 14).

A Rural-Urban Divide

Today half the population of 2,475,400 million people (NSO 2003) live in a pastoral environment, with the other half living in urban areas, and approximately one third of these in the capital, Ulaanbaatar. The situation of rural poverty and glimpses of an easier and prosperous life-style in the urban areas, have triggered desires to abandon herding. The opportunities that have opened in Ulaanbaatar and to some extent in other urban centres are tempting for herders, especially the 'new' herders (of 1990–1993) who know both worlds but may not be completely skilled as herders and thus experience difficulties with livestock management. However, also 'old' herders are tempted to seek new opportunities after years of hard work and deprivation. Lately, *zud* has made conditions worse. The official numbers of herdsmen grew steadily until 1990, went up radically during 1990–1994, and has since then dropped. In 1999–2002 *zud* forced many herders to migrate to urban areas and the number of herdsmen households dropped from 189,897 in 1999 to 175,911 in 2002 (NSO 2003: 151). Although numbers are erratic as they depend on household size and the difficulties of defining when a household is pastoral or rural , recent years have seen a dramatic rise in rural-to-urban migration. However, the numbers are quite erratic as it is depends on the number of children and the difficulties of defining when a family is pastoral or rural as family members may be temporarily sedentary; it does however, indicate the severity of what it is like to live as a herder.[1]

Rural poverty and migration is believed by Mongolian researchers and politicians to have led to deeper urban poverty. There are no social safety nets for people who lose their livelihood as herders and there are no social safety nets in the urban areas. There are, however, more but arbitrary possibilities to secure a livelihood in the urban areas due to the concentration of economic activity there, especially if you have a network to rely on. In the countryside, herders and residents in the *sum* (district) and *aimag* (province) centres experience deteriorating access to education, health care, infrastructure, information, jobs, and find only little human development and economic opportunities. Herders are bound by the obligations of constant animal care and to process the daily amounts of perishable animal product with basically unchanged tools. Inadequate infrastructure makes it difficult to sell products and has caused many herders to move closer to main routes to urban centres. A sign of prosperity is to own large herds, which contributes to overgrazing in many areas and generates not only more income but also labour; it prolongs the day's work drastically, mainly for women and children who care for the small animals, comb, milk and process the milk. Work is hard and harsh winters exacerbate conditions. Both women and men describe poverty as the main reason to leave their areas of origin (Burn 2003: 34). Whether woman or man, being poor is conventionally associated with being lazy (*zalhuu*) and poverty is commonly considered to be your own fault *(ööriin buruu)* either in this or a previous life. Loss of animals (i.e. poverty) is a situation considered to be caused by laziness and thus one's own fault (Humphrey & Sneath 1999: 112). A rich household signals that the family is well functioning as survival of animals and people is dependent on hard work, cooperation, and mutual respect. Women's 'leisure time' is used to make better clothing and food (dried meat, milk products such as curds); tasks that visibly display a woman's hard work and thereby the status of the family.

In-migrants to urban areas who usually make the move due to poverty may encounter the discredit of being blamed for their own situation and face unemployment and degrading treatment by the city people and authorities. The urban centres and mainly Ulaanbaatar are tempting with Western good and lifestyles but are also heavily burdened by the lack of housing and employment, more crime, traffic, pollution and more aggressive attitudes. Construction work has been booming for the past 6–7 years, but only the more affluent citizens are able to afford the new apartments and houses. Newcomers therefore, usually have to settle in their *ger*s in the already overcrowded outskirts. The actual number of migrants that in 1990–1999 was estimated to be 225,669 to Ulaanbaatar or in 1999 alone 39.482 (NSO 2002: 53) may, in fact, be significantly higher, due to various factors of administration and statistics, but mainly due to the registration fee for settlement in the capital. In recent years of growing rural migration the fee rose to MNT 50,000 for adults and MNT 25,000 for children, seriously violating basic human rights of the migrants (National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia 2003: 49). Although many maintain that they have relatives in the city (PTRC & UNFPA 2001: 27), newcomers no longer feel very welcome: nomads are not as closely connected to relatives in the urban centres as before and they are 'growing increasingly divorced culturally and socially from their compatriots in the urban areas' (Campi 2002: 46; Janzen 2002: 235). Many young urban Mongolians (half the population being below 19 years of age) have seldom - or in fact ever – been to the countryside and perceive the herders (*malchin hün*) as ignorant, old-fashioned and rough – a very different image from that during the earlier years of transition, when the 'real Mongolians' were the supportive families living on the steppe.

'Unpaid Family Workers'

During socialism women and men – both herders and all other professions – had equal rights to education and work and earned approximately the same amount for similar work. A countryside family is ideally a close-knit unit, characterised by mutual respect and dependency, with each adult holding private animals, i.e. securing some economic independency. Today society is marked by far greater differences in work and social practices and a far greater mobility, both in terms of the right to travel and in terms of professional development. For those who are still herders, many tasks of everyday life today are similar to tasks undertaken in the socialist period. There is, however, a difference in workload, personal responsibility, and decision-making. The husband in rural families is considered the head of the household but may be absent for periods of time in efforts to trade and make business deals – or may be physically or mentally absent due to heavy drinking. New jobs have developed even within animal husbandry that, at times, now counts paid labourers or part-time gold miners.

In a report on the situation of rural women, Burn objects to the classification of economically active herders (women) as 'unpaid family workers', which is purportedly the employment situation of 69 per cent of the rural population[2] (Burn 2003: 38). Women's unpaid work for private consumption is now included in the 'System of National Accounts' and women herders are therefore not seen as economically active (ADB/WB 2004: 31). This fails to acknowledge women's traditional position in the herding household and it seems odd, considering the traditional ownership rights where women and men both contribute to the household with personal possession of animals. In rare cases of divorce in the Manchu era the possessions were divided according to what the woman had brought with her as dowry and what the herd had grown to. All herders (women and men among commoners, vassals and slaves) looked after the animals of a man from the hereditary aristocracy (a prince, a nobleman, an overlord, a clan leader) or a lama from the Buddhist elite, but had the right to own private animals, if possible (Bawden 1968: 138, Sanders 1987: 32, DeGlopper 1991: 80). According to Szynkiewicz, 'A model father had to assign each of his children a part of his herd; in praxis all the girls who married into another family would be given as part of her dowry' (Szynkiewicz 1989: 126, also Vreeland 1953: 81). The mother could independently choose to give her part of her own dowry along with jewellery (Ibid: 127). Today Burn is rightfully concerned about this 'unpaid family worker' status: 'what is the fit between the economic statistical definition of "unpaid family worker" and their actual role in the household economy? Why are they unpaid and overwhelmingly women? Given the numbers involved and the share of GDP that they generate, it is crucial to understand how this household economy operates under present conditions for both economic efficiency and equity reasons' (Burn 2003: 61). What does it mean for women's sense of independence? And does it give men a sense of power and ownership over wives? It could be that the economic independence of herding women is lost in the process of modernization.

The process of privatization was hurried and poorly controlled and allowed both nepotism and corruption; one tragic outcome has been that many women (and men) lost out in their rightful shares of animals when herds were divided. Animals were usually given to the male heads of households according to his seniority in the *negdel*, thus not acknowledging the customary individual ownership rights within the pastoral household. According to a Rural Sector Gender Responsive Survey carried out in 2002 women have received lesser shares from privatization than men and mention the figure of only 16 per cent of assets (livestock) given to wives (Burn 2003: 54). This poses a significant gap in the ability of women to gain assets under their control (ADB/WB 2004: 13). Pastoral women in Mongolia had and still have ownership and disposal rights over domestic animals although they hold inferior positions in the household compared to men. Although women lost out acquiring more animals, most households gained heads and held more species of animals in order to minimize risks of disease and enable self-sufficiency in foods and crafts. This, as mentioned, left a heavy burden on women and children to herd and care for diversified herds. Compared to the impact of transition with an increase of women's workloads and responsibilities, the lack of ownership and 'unpaid family worker' status is a rather unmerited development.

Feminisation of Education and Labour Market Developments

Young rural women moving to urban centres usually do so for educational purposes (PTRC & UNFPA 2001: 28,78; NSO 2002b: 110). Educational centres for levels after the 10th year of schooling, are only found in *aimag* and city centres and both the rural and urban populace have been given either 4 years of compulsory education since 1945 or 8 years of education since 1960, leaving the population with a literacy level of 95 per cent – which is comparable to Europe and North America. School enrolment indicates an unusual 'reverse gender gap', with more girls enrolled than boys and this applies to the whole country (ADB/WB 2004: 46). Already since 1990 girls and young women have dominated in most educational institutions, mainly because boys were needed as herders and vocational schools closed in the early transition period. In secondary education gross enrolment rates of girls are 20 per cent higher than of boys while in tertiary education women now account for 70 per cent of all students (HDR-Mongolia 2003: 23).

The number of in-migrants is fairly equal for women and men; however, female migrants outnumber men to educational centres such as Ulaanbaatar and Töv, which is close to Ulaanbaatar. In only 8 *aimag*s of 21, the number of migrant men outnumber women, e.g. to Selenge *aimag* in the North and along the rail track going North-South. These are industrial areas and target men more than women. According to The National Statistical Office (2001) female migration patterns are closely linked to the feminization of education, especially in secondary and tertiary levels. Although families and young single women migrate to other urban centres, Ulaanbaatar is the usual choice, given the educational opportunities and employment profile (Burn 2003: 33). Young women who have been educated tend to remain in the urban area, and many today settle in types of households that were rare in the socialist period or did not exist (e.g. homosexual relationships). However, education is not necessarily a guarantee of relevant jobs as these to some extent have come to depend on connections and appearances.

The labour market in urban post-socialist Mongolia is a Klondike with a few very fortunate (or talented) women and men finding good positions, but unfortunately leaving many both women and men unemployed and disappointed. Employees may work with temporary contracts, fail to receive social insurance or be forced by poverty to take work in prison-like factories that hold workers behind locked doors with compulsory over-time until production goals are reached or the management/owner satisfied[3]. This, for some reason, often befalls women who tend to agree to unacceptable salaries and conditions in order to feed their families[4]. Initially, women in post-socialist countries lost jobs faster than men and remained unemployed for longer, finding it more difficult to find jobs (Robinson & Solonge 2000: 5). Employment conditions in Mongolia has certainly changed and is characterised by decreasing job opportunities, more self-employed and unemployed, and erosion of state entitlements facilitating entry into and maintaining employment especially for women with child care obligations (Burn 2003: 43).

In various sectors, women dominate as employees: In hotels and catering (79.8 per cent), education (66.3)[5], health and social services (64.9), financial institutions (61.2), trade – wholesale and retail (54.2), public services (50.3) whereas they are underrepresented in agriculture and game hunting (46.8), civil service and armed forces (42.4), as journalists (40 per cent out of a total of 1,500), in industry, processing, electricity, mining, construction and telecommunications and transport (38–41 per cent) (NSO 1998[6]). Women's work in the informal sector in Ulaanbaatar in 1997 was: kiosk sellers, 63.4 per cent, street vendors, 51.3 per cent, market traders, 47.5 per cent. Many of these are hired labour but some women own their businesses and may profit well if they find the right goods that are in demand. Kiosk sellers are not necessarily poor or illiterate, but could easily be engineers or teachers at public schools or higher levels. The same goes for taxi drivers of both sexes who, to a large extent, are hired by taxi companies and not as in the early days of transition, just anyone who owned or had access to a car and a driver's licence. Women comprise a growing percentage of waged labourers, traders, and small-scale entrepreneurs. For positions that demand a university degree, women's participation is: lawyers 50 per cent (163 out of a total of 325 in 1997), judges – over half, however less at the higher levels: 18 per cent of the Supreme Court, 42 per cent of the Provincial and Municipal Court, 63 per cent of *sum* district courts. Girls and women outnumber men in almost all educational institutions and have done so since the mid-1990s.

The prominence of women in many influential positions should be evident given the general educational situation in Mongolia that is so dominated by girls and young women that one may speak of a feminisation of education. But regardless of educational levels, women are often discriminated against because of age, sex, marital status, and physical appearance. Many employers even display sexual discrimination in job advertisements that specify certain desirable characteristics for job applicants. The Association of Mongolian Women Lawyers recently conducted a survey on women's unemployment. It found that 28.5 per cent of those interviewed felt they had not obtained work because of their sex, and only 3.5 per cent felt ostracised due to their age (Burn 2003: 58). According to all informants and newspaper advertisements there are clear signs of a sexualization of the labour market and it is also felt that women over 35 stand little chance of finding jobs if they do not have good connections, are young, or are considered beautiful.

Most women are in no position to negotiate salaries or refer to labour rights, but work under unacceptable conditions, particularly when they are sole breadwinners. Even despite better education and relative high positions, women face gender-specific difficulties in employment. What some women point to as reasons are: maternity leave and pensions, and too many women for too few jobs resulting in unfair selection criterion (favouring the young and good-looking). Employed women are secured the 101 days paid maternity leave through the Maternal and Infant Law and are entitled to take an unpaid period of up to two years of child-care leave which includes a social benefits allowance; during this time, their jobs are retained for them. The Pensions Law (1990 amendment) allowed women with four or more children to be pensioned off from work as they were occupied in 'social care'. But today pensions for mothers, the aged and handicapped are so low that the monthly amounts are hardly worth considering. In 1994 more than half of all pensioned women of working age received amounts based on the number of children they had. A side effect of maternity leave is, of course, that employers are reluctant to employ women, especially in the private sector. With many nurseries and kindergartens closed, women have to care of children themselves or rely on other family members for support. The classic consequence of this situation is that women gain less work experience during the years of maternity leave and afterwards. In addition, many women express that their attitudes to work change as family obligations take priority.

New Family Types

Transition and migration have had effects on the composition of the family. New gender roles and positions are created and many women (and men) experience a changed perception of their places in society; that is, new gender identities are created. What women and men do, respectively, in both the urban and rural areas is no longer within the stable, balanced or predictable frame of the socialist period that many Mongolians today refer to. With new socio-economic opportunities Mongolians in general and in-migrants specifically are forced to find and create new roles to fill both in the family and in society: roles that may change the balances of power and decision-making and change how individuals perceive of themselves.

Today's perception of women and the family is influenced by a history characterized by a special cocktail of recent and almost consistent pastoral society followed by an influential socialist system. In both there has been a demand for women to be hardworking and there has been acceptance of women's management of household economy. And there has been an external image of strong and independent Mongolian women, linked to a characteristic of Mongolian women being sexually lenient – an image that Mongolians themselves hold of Gobi women today. This historical image of sexual independence is put into context by Bulag who quotes a young woman of asking 'what would be wrong by giving my life and body to a foreigner instead of being beaten up and cursed by this bad beastly evil-hearted Mongol?' (Bulag 1998: 154). In 1876 Prejevalsky gives the following characteristic of the Halh (Khalkha):

> The women are good mothers and housewives, but unfaithful wives. Immorality is most common, not only among the married women, but also among the girls. Adultery is not even concealed, and is not regarded as a vice. (Prejevalsky 1876: 70)

Others, as Vreeland, write about the Halh Mongols that while some adultery was recognized, the custom of wife lending was not (Vreeland 1953: 67). He also writes of the Chahar Mongols that 'extra-marital affairs were common for both sexes; since most marriages were arranged, man and wife were frequently incompatible, and each might have a lover on the side' (ibid: 160), a view shared by other travellers at the time (Jacobsen 1991: 35). DeGlopper in 1991 writes that 'Mongols valued fertility over virginity and did not share the obsessive concern with female purity found in much of Southwest, South and East Asia' (DeGlopper 1991: 95). Some informants point to nomadic women's knowledge of animal procreation and thus a relatively natural attitude to human procreation as a reason for low morals. Others point to the practice of polygamy (or having concubines), although it was quite rare and usually practised due to infertility with the first wife (Prejevalsky 1876: 69, Vreeland 1953: 52, Szynkiewicz 1989: 130). Others again, especially Mongolian scholars, point to the moral depravity from outside influences such as the low morals of many Lamaist monks (Bawden

1968: 160,165–170, Baabar 1999: 302). According to Lattimore 'Mongol women make loving and diligent wives and mothers' so much so, that Chinese merchants found it difficult to keep concubines and their children only as 'temporary' households (1962: 68). He refers to the absence of young men who had been sent to the monasteries as disciples, leaving a shortage of men; Mongolian women therefore married Chinese men or 'were kept' as a second family.

In socialist society the praxis of accepting single female-headed households was perpetuated. The single family was a more common category that came to hold 'secret love' (*nuuts amrag*) families that seem to be related to the "temporary" households mentioned above. The 'secret love' family is a female-headed urban or rural household with a relatively stable benefactor who is also an informal spouse with a 'formal' family elsewhere. It is on the basis of such historical accounts from pre-socialist and socialist times that foreign visitors have presupposed that Mongolian women were sexually uninhibited and even promiscuous. Although many women today reject infidelity for both women and men and rather long for a stable nuclear family based on love, and although the Mongol tribes traditionally had strict rules of marriage, the reputation of sexual leniency remains.

Today single – and married – women gain some sort of protection and support from the custom; but it is not verified that women express a desire to be a mistress in a society officially holding the family in the highest regard. In many cases the formal wife knows about the secret lover and possible children but husbands in general are not asked to choose between the families or leave; a situation that may change depending on women's economic independence and Mongolian perceptions of the family. In the urban areas, young women seem to share the same dream of being part of a happy family, but are worried about the chances of finding a non-abusive partner to marry. For this reason – and not just because women have the right to a sexual life – the praxis of having a *nuuts amrag* is still common.

Another type of family is the 'waiting family' that is a nuclear family in which the spouse is seeking luck abroad through legal or illegal emigration. Mongolians travel mainly to South Korea, Kazakhstan, the Czech Republic and other countries (UNDP study report 2003: 43). To some unknown extent, large numbers of men and – an increasing number of – women leave Mongolia on illegal visas to work or seek asylum in foreign countries. It is believed that some 15–30.000 Mongolians work illegally in Korea and that an unknown number have travelled to Europe and North America on illegal visas. These emigrants or travellers leave their families behind for a period of time (1–5 years). The remaining spouses and children usually have to manage by themselves and, if fortunate, receive remittances[7]. A family seemingly accepts that the father, mother or both parents test their luck abroad.

Victims of Domestic Violence

For families in need for social safety nets where none exist, insecurity, unemployment, alcoholism and spousal abuse often go hand in hand. The Parliament of Mongolia on May 13th 2004 adopted a Domestic Violence Bill, which gives hope that domestic violence will be treated as a crime and registered. Today there are 'no reliable statistics regarding the extent of domestic abuse but qualified observers believed that it is common, affecting as much as one-third of the female population' (http: //us.politinfo.com). What is reported is murder; in 2001 murders of women were 17 per cent of all murder cases (US Department of States 2004). Statistics on crime rates document the influence of alcohol on crime: '18.6 per cent of total offences were committed by drunkards and 70.4 per cent of offenders were unemployed' (NSO 2003: 271). Yet spousal abuse was considered private and not registered at all – until 2004. The new law is a step, but despite of this, women will be reluctant to report domestic violence. It is common learning in Mongolian society that wives ask for the beatings they get. A saying states that 'Wives and goats have to be beaten once a month. They know well the reason of this beating.'[8] On the other hand, some informants maintain that domestic violence is a recent development. Baabar writes that before socialism, 'since ancient times it was considered taboo to rape women or to seduce children into debauchery [. . .]. No instances of women and wives being beaten were observed in Mongolian society' (Baabar 1999: 308–309), thus adding to this popular belief. Other domestic violence that is seldom reported is parents suffering from violence committed by their adult children which is a great taboo and a great problem, just as women being pressured to the extreme, themselves beating or even killing husband, children or parents, or driving their children to the streets (ref. Note 9).

Disagreement in the family is seen in the numbers of divorces. These skyrocketed from a yearly 700 to 2,243 in 1990 and to 6,000 in the first quarter of 1993 (Altantsetseg in Skapa & Benwell 1996: 139). This, however, is not recorded in more recent statistics. Presumably unofficial divorces were counted for a short period. Officially, the number has again dropped, to around 700, which ranges at the same level as in 1985. Divorce or breaking up has become a norm in the city, but is not easily counted due to the fact that more couples cohabit and break up without official registration. In any case, the number of single female-headed households has gone from 19,289 in 1990 to 61,765 in 2002 (Robinson & Solonge 2000: 15, NSO 2003: 48). In the Gobi region 24 per cent of all households were reported to have a woman as the head, a number contested to be around 12–15 per cent, but nevertheless somewhat higher than the national average of 10 per cent before 1990 (Skapa and Benwell 1996: 140–141). Approximately a quarter of these particular households, have six or more children and half belong to the poorest group in the population. The difficulty of giving precise numbers lies in the definition of female-headed household; it is not clear, for instance, if numbers include grandmothers, who have adult children in their own *ger*s in the same *hot ail*.

The socialist state dictated acceptance of single females and care of their children. However, in rural areas these single women were often socially shunned or excluded by neighbouring women, who felt threatened that their close proximity might tempt their husbands. At the same time these neighbours may have felt sympathy for the single mother, as her situation could be based on rape, incest, or abandonment; issues that could not easily be addressed. Today these attitudes to single women still exist, tending to limit other women's wish for divorce.[9] Divorce in pastoral society was accepted in both pre-socialist and socialist society and could be effectuated upon the wish of the wife. As for the stigma associated with divorce, a Swedish ethnographer quotes a Mongolian proverb (that, however, I have not found others who know): 'A divorced woman and a left over heap of dung [for fuel] is the property of any man' (Montell 1934: 120, my translation from Swedish). Today many young urban couples choose not to marry, making it difficult to register divorces as cohabitation and informal divorce are not registered. Single and/or divorced women, usually with 'fatherless' children, experience social exclusion and depend on family, the benevolence of the fathers of the children, or other men for support. Although long established, divorce (formal or informal) is considered a modern or urban matter and frowned upon. According to informants it challenges unwritten laws against public announcement of problems that the family has not been able to solve, making it much more acceptable to be the 'real family' compared to the 'secret family' – or a 'waiting family' to a husband who has in reality left for good. Although being single is both common and socially permitted it seems that divorce is relatively rare considering the levels of domestic violence. Divorcing is still difficult as it signals a woman's lack of respect for her husband and breaks the code of keeping up appearances. According to some informants women are accustomed to occasional beatings and choose this before the condemnation of society – besides the fact that it is difficult to find other housing if a woman chooses to leave with the children.

Traditional Positions of Women

The discussion on sexual habitude has more aspects, which may be clarified by looking back in time. Women in Mongol society in early mainly Chinese and Russian texts[10] are depicted as being respected and rather independent. They are said to be holding higher social positions and being more autonomous than women in other central Asian regions, which is re-iterated by more recent sources (Söderbom 1954: 143, Jagchid & Hyer 1979: 94, DeGlopper 1991: 94, Baabar 1999: 308). Despite this, other sources describe women as being slaves and severely suppressed by their husbands and visiting lamas (Marthinson 1985: 93–95). This difference is partly due to the individual outlook, time and morality of the traveller/researcher and the perhaps unintentional style of writing[11]. A strong image of Mongolian pastoral women is their ability to manage traditional male tasks and participate in decision-making in nomadic livestock rearing; an image also prominent in 20th century descriptions of the various Mongol tribes (Hedley 1910, Lattimore 1962, Bawden 1968, Sanders 1968, Jagchid & Hyer 1979, DeGlopper 1991, Bruun 2005). Over the centuries since pre-empire (12th century) the 'static' status of Mongol women in travel accounts has, however, differed according to external factors such as political changes, religious beliefs, and socio-economic circumstances that influenced the balance of power.[12]

It is generally believed that women's relatively strong position within the family and society today stems from traditional (pre-socialist) interdependence between husband and wife – for a period that spanned over hundreds of centuries. Men were responsible for hard labour such as building winter shelters for the animals, digging wells and herding large animals, while women had household labour and herding, collection of dung and processing of animal products for food and clothing as their main responsibilities[13] (Vreeland 1953: 48–50). Women and men were, however, usually able to fill in for the other, as they had been during the sometimes yearlong warfare during the empire of Chinggis Khan. Women held fixed and accepted – but inferior – gender positions, both within strict household ranking and according to family background and social strata. Society consisted of 'nobles and commoners, and sometimes also of slaves and war captives, and of subordinate tribes which, without being enslaved, lived under the protection and at the orders of stronger tribes' (Lattimore 1962: 58).

Obviously, women's subordination also varied according to their social status. A young newly-wed woman in the patrilocal *ger* camp had to be extremely submissive to men, except in her natal home with her consanguine male relatives. In her new home she had to obey strict rules of speech and behaviour, showing respect to her husband, male relatives, and especially her father-in-law (Humphrey 1978: 101). This was of course instilled through the socialization of children. The positions and rights of family members complied with strict hierarchical rules and *yos*, the congregating moral principle prescribing correct behaviour including speech, bodily gesture, and spatial movement rooted in historical values and still to some extent in force today (Lindskog 2000: 131–160). Women's place was in the southeast of the *ger*, by the stove and opposite the altar where a shaman would keep his or her regalia and where later the Buddhist/Lamaist objects would be kept. The *ger* was a symbolic reminder of behaviour, regulating movement and seating according to rank in the family and in society. Despite an inferior position to men women were capable of managing on their own and decisions were based on discussions within the household involving both women and men. This included issues such as household economy i.e. all aspects of animal husbandry, and – among the nobility – also in political matters (Jagchid & Hyer 1979: 94).

Buddhism came to play a significant role in Mongolia. It was re-introduced by the Manchu in the 17th century,[14] and according to some scholars seen as a good alternative to the all-embracing feudal system that existed and subordinated 90 per cent of the population (DeGlopper 1991: 81). During this period the herders became attached to the residence of a prince or a monastery and their mobility therefore limited. According to the Manchu structure of society women were to occupy a position lower than men. Within the family women were respected in their roles as mothers, although expected to be unselfish, loyal, and willing to help their husband and his family, whether belonging to the strata of lord, servant or slave. However, early travellers of the 18th and 19th centuries dwell on women's influence within the family and their voice in public, economic and political matters. They are also surprised by women's explicit sexuality and promiscuous behaviour (Hedley 1910: 243–44). This characterization is given with no reflection upon women's duty to be subservient and the situations that may have caused 'promiscuous' behaviour in the first place.

Mongolian sources in particular turn to a critique of external influences for the degeneration of social systems and morality. Lamaist Buddhism, which is generally associated with peacefulness, enlightenment, art and learning, did not organise support to poor commoners – on the contrary, families were forced to provide food and even sons for the monasteries (Baabar 1999: 309).

The lamas and monks who comprised almost half the adult male population relied on the nomadic families to provide for their livelihood just as commoners had worked or slaved for the nobility previously (Lattimore 1962: 103). In fact, lamas of all classes ranging from lay nobility to servants took advantage of women. Hedley gives a particular negative description of lamas as 'the least desirable, the most offensive of their race' in any economic, moral, or religious sense (1910: 358–9). Lamas along with merchants were presumably responsible for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, mainly syphilis that affected the majority of the population in the early 1900s and caused widespread infertility

(Montell 1934: 120, Bawden 1968: 146, Jagchid & Hyer 1979: 96–100, Baabar 1999: 302). Söderbom who travelled among the Mongol tribes from 1927–1935 recognised a low sexual moral but believed accusations of 'promiscuity' to be made mainly by the Chinese. He also challenged the belief that syphilis had spread to the whole population, although he admits that the disease is everywhere found and spread among all social groups (Söderbom 1954: 143).

The pastoral household depended on enough family members for herding and processing animals product. With syphilis causing infertility many couples had to adopt; a practice that is still strong today. Hard labour, poverty, poor hygiene and health care[15] caused abortions and high infant mortality – a mother giving birth to ten children could see perhaps two grow up, and see one boy off to the local monastery. In this context it is easier to see how individuals could be driven to extremes, such as, for instance, surviving through prostitution.

Despite the many negative descriptions given here a characteristic and quite different impression of gender relations in contemporary Mongolia exists. Mildred Cable, a missionary travelling in the early 20th century, writes that she observed in a Mongol home:

> . . . a happy camaraderie between the young married people, which was revealed by the straight, honest, open, appreciative looks they exchanged [. . .] She [the wife] is the husband's helper and takes her full share, in fact more than her share, of pastoral work. She is not his chattel but his fellow-labourer, and is valued accordingly. (Cable 1984 [1942]: 169).

The Influence of Socialism

For changes in gender roles in the pastoral households some of the most influential issues in the early 1900s were the elimination of serfdom in 1922, the expropriation of 'feudal' property in 1925, and the elimination of clerical nobility and dominance in the late 1930s, when thousands of lamas and monks were killed, imprisoned or returned to their families (Sanders 1987: 34, DeGlopper 1991: 102). From 1924–1990 Mongolia increasingly became a modern Soviet-communist state. Russian experts and advisers were represented at all levels in rural and urban public administration, trade, and as military. The influence of the Soviet system was felt both positively and negatively for rural as well as urban Mongolians: modern health care was provided to the remotest areas while everything that had been considered sacred for centuries was abruptly banned. In order to accomplish an industrialized nation, part of the population had to become sedentary and migration of nomads to settlements in urban areas was necessary and actively promoted. Rural administration, educational facilities, boarding schools, health clinics and hospitals made it possible for nomads to chose this way of life and the number of people in state administration, industry, and service/media grew, at times too fast.

Communist ideology dictated equal rights for both sexes by law and female participation in education and public life increased over the years. Yet a male elite of bureaucrats and party members emerged. Below these was a 'managerial elite' of both sexes; technical specialist (engineers, doctors, university teachers) followed by male and female teachers, industrial workers, administrative personnel and lastly herders. Russian was taught in all schools and the extensive boarding school system ensured compulsory education for both urban and rural girls and boys and encouraged children to acknowledge the nation (DeGlopper 1991: 84) and not, for instance, the local area or ethnic group. In 1989 literacy was officially around 95 per cent.

Female representation was legally guaranteed in all state institutions including parliament. The first women were appointed to positions in local government in 1925 and in 1929 the first woman was appointed as a member of the People's Supreme Court. Women also became local government officials and by 1931 two were *aimag* governors. Major changes took place during the industrialization and urbanization in the 1950s. A large part of the population abandoned animal husbandry or became part-time herders managing herds alongside urban jobs as a new working class. In the early 1950s the population was 95 per cent pastoral (Campi 2002: 44) compared to about 80 per cent in the late 1950s and 47.5 per cent in 1998. In the 1960s measures were taken to boost the population through maternity leave and nursing homes – a time called 'the explosion period'. In 1978 with 35.000 new residents in Ulaanbaatar over a 5-year period (1972–78) the government decided to restrict internal travel through a system of travel permits (Sanders 1987: 50–51), a restriction that further limited the movement of the population. Besides all this, women were encouraged to have children; and this was regardless of their marital status (cf. Sanders 1989, Bawden 1968). When resident Chinese labourers in the late 1960s were expelled as a sign of the Sino-Soviet conflict, one of the reasons given was their distribution of contraceptives (DeGlopper 1991: 69). Childbearing was 'every woman's patriotic obligation' in order to increase the population rate to 2 million as decreed by the government. Both married and unmarried women with children were entitled to receive state benefits giving them the right to 101 days maternity leave with full wages was set in effect (Sanders 1987: 80). The Order of Maternal Glory, Second and First Class, was given to mothers at the birth of their 5th and 8th living child, along with vacations and other benefits (DeGlopper 1991: 69). According to scholars such as Ashwin, Communism attempted to institutionalize a new 'gender order' that defined women as 'workers' and 'mothers' who were to be loyal to the state (and not primarily to their families), just as men were to be loyal to the state as a 'father'[16]. Women's liberation through rights to education, to work, to have maternity leave and pension was directed at 'breaking the subordination of women to the patriarchal family in order to "free" both men and women to serve the communist cause' (Ashwin 2000: 5).

In reality, women became worker-mothers with double work while men had a higher-status role to play (Ashwin 2000: 2–7). In Mongolia at the start of the socialist period, rural women and men both worked hard and substituted for each other in most daily activities and it was 'permissible for a wife to leave the camp on her own initiative' and she could 'accept strangers as overnight guests in her own tent' (Vreeland 1953: 49, 150). Pastoral women in the 1950s and onwards experienced a period with more leisure time owing to the prefabricated products given to the households in exchange for herding the *negdel* animals. During the socialist period, women in both urban and rural areas became 'workers' and urban women took over professions that in the West are considered male, e.g. construction workers and painters. However, urban women and men predominantly held specific types of jobs although the division of labour was not meticulous. Women because 'weaker' were seen as second-rate workers and men with hard or dirty jobs were compensated by being recognized as 'heroes' (Ashwin 2000: 12).

For migrants or those who moved from herding to other professions, specific gendered tasks changed dramatically. Many women who were herders became (semi-) sedentary when moving to *sum*, *aimag* or city centres to study, teach or work in factories, *negdel*s or in administration. Daily household tasks such as fetching water, shopping, cooking, and cleaning also varied and constituted starting points for new social relations. Numerous nurseries and kindergartens made women's participation in the *negdel*/work force possible. In short, women remained responsible for the household and childcare, while having waged labour. Women's much accentuated civility towards men was still largely expected and upheld with gender roles ideally defined according to those of the pastoral household. However, the socialist 'gender order' according to Ashwin (2000) aimed to weaken family and kinship bonds and promote women's loyalty to the state for the sake of future generations of communists.

Socialisation and Decision-Making Power

Both the legacy of pre-socialism and socialism in Mongolia leave an image of women being independent and taking strong positions in the family and in society. Today women take part in public forums, voice opinions, and are heard. In the rural areas socialization usually takes place in the family unit, in the *ger* and in public boarding schools, i.e. a dual socialization of Mongolian pastoralism and post-socialism. Although family members move with relative ease within the spaces of the *ger*, all parts are appointed to the particular sex and age of family members and guests. Regardless of social strata, the space of the *ger* is a reminder of the codes of conduct, *yos*, and an important instrument for teaching children and adolescents good social behaviour and independence; i.e. a socialization to conventional gender roles.

Much socialization also in urban areas is performed in *ger*s. Modern towns and cities have grown out of *ger* districts and today comprise large parts of the urban areas. In the Russian, Chinese and new Mongolian apartment buildings the interior has come to follow patterns similar to that of the *ger* with designating areas for women and men, respectively. Perhaps as an influencing factor these spatial manifestations add to the fact that the rules of *yos* are slowly fading and are relatively unknown to the younger generations, especially those who grow up in apartments. Yet, the *ger* is an important cultural link between urban and rural Mongolians and an element in maintaining gender identities

Nevertheless, socialization still aims at fostering independent and strong individuals. While children are cherished, they are brought up to be tough, i.e. whimpering is not accepted and both girls and boys learn from an early age to control emotions.

Traditional pastoral social structures are referred to regarding women's decision-making power. 'It is impossible to develop strict controls within the family in a nomadic society [. . .] A greater degree of mutual consent on major decisions within the family, clan, or society is necessary to maintain stability and viability' (Jagchid & Hyer 1979: 95). In addition, the communist ideology of women and men's equal rights has maintained women's decisive and authoritative ways – as long as men's higher position is honoured. It is difficult to measure decision-making in the family as decisions are often made following negotiations between spouses and/or other members of the family. Decisions may also be taken following more subtle communication of consent or rejection hidden in silence, gestures and mimic that call for more qualitative data. An indication of women and men's decision-making in specific areas, is given in a relatively recent survey that shows differences in selected fields at *aimag*, *sum* and *bag* level:

In:	**Aimag centre (148)**		**Sum centre (65)**		**Rural Bag (213)**	
Decision-making by:	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Spend resources	75	73	39	26	114	99
Child care	30	118	10	55	35	178
Employment	99	49	45	20	162	51
Family planning	45	103	14	51	87	126
Migration	121	27	58	7	189	24

Source: RSGRS 2002

The statistics shown in this report are most useful for observing differences in decision-making according to residence and thereby the respondents' connection to animal husbandry and traditional decision-making practices. As such, family planning is clearly women's domain in all three centres, although men in *bag*s, however, are seen to have a much higher say in this question, presumably due to the pastoral setting in *bags*. Migration, on the other hand, is mainly a male decision, which could indicate that men traditionally take the more uncommon or public-sphere decisions. The table, however, does not indicate what discussions take place within the family or between spouses, leading to one of them to articulate the final decision.

In political/public decision-making women seem not to reach the highest positions easily. During socialist times, there was a quota system for female representation in state administration but this ceased after 1990. Women's positions within the power structure are lower than their male counterparts and their share of administrative and managerial positions is only 18.7 per cent (UNDP 1997b, p.65). For example, in the Mongolian legal system there is a tendency for women's representation to be diminished, as the power of the court's decision-making accelerates. Women's representation in parliament dropped from 24.9 per cent under the Communist system to 8.4 per cent after the 2000 elections[17]; among the 25 diplomatic ambassadors there is but one woman; and among cabinet members, state secretaries, chairpersons of *aimag* and city assemblies (*hurals*) none are women. In 1999, only nine out of 360 *aimag*, city, *sum* and district governors were women (UNDP 2000: 11).

Women thus have less influence in policy-making bodies and forums than they had before transition. According to Robinson & Solongo this inequity cannot be attributed to lower educational levels (2000: 17). The cause of this gender imbalance is rather a question of women and men's gender positions in both public and private spheres, positions that have been shaped through history, influenced and challenged by external factors. The position and possibilities of Mongolian women depend on new social relations in the family and in society. Even women with high educations, jobs and families may be overworked, poorly paid, and not able to attend the needs of their children. The situation today is influenced by the 'gender order' that today is a reminiscent of the socialist times where the paternal state saw women as workers and mothers and provided care for maternity leave, pensions, kindergartens and schools so women could work and show loyalty not only to the family but to the paternal state. With this state gone or left weak, women (and men) seem to restore male authority in family and society; a burden many men cannot carry along with unemployment and excessive drinking.

Present Gender-Related Challenges

Issues publicly debated today in Mongolia are economic development, poverty, and crime. Corruption and domestic violence have not customarily been discussed in the open. To talk about problems is commonly believed to draw the attention of bad spirits, just as it is a blemish on the appearance of the family and the country. But with the severity of domestic violence and the related problems of street children, gangs and criminal groups political decision-makers have been forced to address the issue.

The tendency towards stable hard-working women and men who are either downtrodden and disillusioned or manoeuvring in a grey zone is connected with alcohol consumption. This is presumably not an exclusively Mongolian problem but appears in much literature on post-socialist societies (Ashwin, 2000). Many Mongolians, however, also identify alcohol as a problem but point to the regular contact with Russians during socialism and the flow of vodka from Russia as the main reasons for heavy drinking patterns (Baabar 1999: 309). Domestic (and Chinese and Russian contraband vodka) was practically the only item to be bought in shops in the early years of transition but was rationed allowing 1.5 litres of domestic vodka per family per month. Long before this, however, early travellers reported considerable alcohol consumption. Today 51.2 per cent of the adult population – and 6 per cent of these, women – is permanently abusing alcohol. A new phenomenon in Mongolia is that children, youths and women become addicted to alcohol (UNDP study report 2003: 11), quite contrary to traditional practices that regulated the rights to drink for different age groups of men (Jagchid & Hyer 1979: 82)[18].

Although Mongolian women do not seem to take responsibility for their husbands' addiction and behaviour caused by alcohol, they do, however, increasingly fall victim to vodka-fuelled violence. With only one shelter for victims of domestic violence in the country (in Ulaanbaatar), women rely on their own networks for help. It is estimated that one in three women in Mongolia are affected by domestic violence (www.asylumaid.org). 65 per cent of women in a survey of 500 people[19] told that their husbands drink vodka; non-graduate, but professionally skilled women of the age 31–40 are worried about their husbands being 'fond of alcohol'; and uneducated women are 'accepting their husbands [as] alcoholics as an unavoidable fact' (UNDP study report 2003: 13). Some examples will illustrate the tolerance of Mongolian women to behaviour generated by alcohol. The wife of a *sum* governor witnessed her husband fall off his chair in an alcoholic stupor during a public meeting in his *sum* in front of his constituency, representatives from a ministry and foreign guests. The wife, who was a teacher, outwardly showed proper respect by trying to appear as if a minor accident had occurred with a wobbly chair and avoided any public recognition of a problem. In a similar case involving the deputy headmaster in a Gobi *sum*, the wife proudly introduced her successful and very intoxicated spouse. She seemed oblivious of the fact that he was quite visibly drunk most of the time. This was – according to her friends who did not like the conversation – because 'everybody' is married to a man who drinks too much and at least her husband had not deserted her and still held his professional position. Also she would avoid a confrontation with her husband that could develop into domestic violence. The tendencies of women emerging as stable, honest and hard-working as opposed to a – partly true but at times very unfair – description of men being dishonest, unsuccessful, violent and/or lazy are not easily addressed when cultural norms stipulate that women be subservient and loyal to men.

Men who fail, through alcohol abuse, as main providers, are said to be publicly and privately humiliated, and tend to be unemployed or in low wage brackets. On the other hand, men – in a rather unreliable consensus and in contrast to women – often seem to be engaging in more random and risky enterprises. Some female informants maintain that many men survive on illegal deals and corruption that society commonly seems to accept or reluctantly tolerate. An interesting question is why these men represent the hope of the family climbing the social ladder, when their success is statistically limited and based on illegal action.[20] Particularly heavy drinking occurs in groups of males, such as in the police force, where individuals receive an abundance of alcohol through bribes. Ill health and even alcohol-related deaths among policemen over the age of just 40 is said to be much higher here than among other professions; however, no statistics document this. Small-scale corruption within the police has taken place since the transition began, and is said to be where corruption originated among 'ordinary' Mongolians. Today it is common practice to offer a bottle to or share one with officials to obtain any documents, authorisations, meetings or business deals (UNDP study report 2003: 14–20). Corruption in general (also predominant among women) is now estimated to be one of the worst emerging evils at all levels and poses a threat to a sound societal transformation in Mongolia (Bruun et al 2001). No reports precisely document corruption or the extent of domestic violence – and it is not specified to which social groups the effected people belong.

Avoidance and Keeping Up Appearances

Social problems paralleling poverty are often alcohol-related and hard to address as drinking is considered a private matter. Cultural norms prescribe that

Mongolians do not discuss family matters or social problems outside a very small circle, usually of relatives. Outwardly, domestic and social problems are tabooed. Domestic violence – child abuse, incest, and rape, for example – is not easily discussed and is not reported to the police by women who want to hide the fact and who know that the police will not consider this a crime in any case. It is not only a strong culture of avoidance of problematic issues and a practice of keeping up appearances in public; thumping wives (and parents beating children) has been/is considered normal in many families.

A strong aim of Soviet-socialism was to catch up with and overtake the West, and it was important to outwardly give an impression of success and achievement while problems were hidden (Ashwin 2000: 10). During 70 years of socialism Mongolians appear to have adopted (or perpetuated from pre-socialism) some of these tendencies. Socialist society may also have advanced the need of individuals to give an impression of wealth and fashion, signalling good connections and privileges allowing one to travel or buy at the diplomat shops. Today women (as men) in rural as well as urban areas do not want to be stigmatized as lazy and therefore display their wealth by wearing gold earrings and silk *deels*, the Mongolian dress for men and women, and – in addition for urban women – anything in fashion (clothes, jewellery, cell phones). Some urban teachers will rather starve and cut family budgets in order to buy new clothes; urban women today will rather freeze in modern clothes rather than look unfashionable or bulky in warm clothes, which, nevertheless, they may as well have done during socialism had they had the chance. The status of urban women working in the public arena, now seems to be attributed to the woman directly and not the husband/family as traditionally according to the proverb: 'Guests visiting a family respect the dignity of the husband but appraise and honour the family according to the taste of the wife's tea.' Women's strong position within the family and society derived from traditional nomadic interdependence between wife and husband in livestock rearing and, in addition, from the socialist protection of the smallest stable unit of production. Today nomadic women, whose husbands have left to work in the city, manage the herds on a much more insecure basis. In urban areas, women – often with a better education – increasingly secure a stable income or are breadwinners. In cases where the men are unemployed or unable to work due to ill health or alcoholism, the households are in practice run by females. A woman working full-time may ensure less than the basic needs (Robinson and Solongo 2000: 11), but it may be easier and more economic to be single, 'rather than cope with male partners not contributing to household income and bringing domestic violence and other social ills into their family' (ADB/WB 2004: 45).

The culture of avoidance of problems and keeping up appearances means that issues such as alcohol-related domestic violence are not reported, documented, and registered, and thus cannot be sufficiently addressed. Transition has both revealed and exacerbated problems that are now so visible that it is no longer possible to pretend nothing is wrong. Mongolian men – after years of unemployment and poverty or having experienced the radical change of in-migration and finding their wives as breadwinners – may feel their masculinity threatened. For some, crime has seemed better than being unemployed and unneeded (ADB/WB 2004: 45). What Mongolians themselves, particularly women, today are beginning to underline is that the real problem in their society is alcohol. It was a private problem but is now so obvious and general that it has become a public issue.

Conclusion: Conflicting Strategies

The two issues initially brought to attention, women's increasing prominence in education and employment, versus the feminisation of poverty and rise in domestic violence, are not mutually exclusive. A woman may be educated and the breadwinner in the household while also being poor and the victim of domestic violence. The gender roles of both women and men have changed dramatically and the family in both urban and rural Mongolia has become a much more unstable unit. Couples cohabitate, divorce more easily, more households are single headed, and new types of families such as the 'secret' and 'waiting' families have developed or consolidated. Although changes appear visible in the rural areas, women's positions are also changing. Here women may be trapped in violent relationships due to the gender discrimination of conferring animals to the men in the privatisation process, creating a category of 'unpaid family workers' with women deprived of their status as equal partners in the herding household.

The feminization of education is a major concern. Not only do more women than men leave the countryside for educational purposes perhaps as a way out of subordinate positions; they also come to dominate in many professions. Young men who leave the countryside usually do so in the hope of finding at least unskilled work in urban centres, which is generally not easy. Unemployment of men, women's positions on the labour market, and the feminization of education leads scientists to worry about gender identities, not so much for women, but the effects women's new status has on men: young men often turn to hold very masculine ideals that in extremes nurture gangs or criminal groups and encourage the disadvantaged (the poor and the unemployed) to join. Another worry is the development of groups of men who cast off the obligation to be responsible providers and become selfish, often body-conscious playboy-types. If not kept under some control in time in Mongolia, the so-called 'reverse gender gap' in education may result in more unstable gender relations as in countries with 'mounting evidence of boys and young men becoming disconnected and marginalized from their families and communities' (ADB/WB 2004: 48).

There is reason to be concerned that as men become more macho, women may increasingly be judged on the basis of looks and strive to look their best, compromising household budgets. In Mongolia it is now a fact that many urban and even highly educated Mongolian women find it difficult to qualify for jobs if they are over 35 years old and not good-looking, i.e. the experience of an increased sexualization of the labour market. Such development generates the tendencies of women to spend their meagre resources on jewellery and clothes that signal wealth. This is believed by Mongolians in general to indicate high status and power. It is, however, also associated to the connections and risk-mindedness of the family, especially the father or patriarchal kin. Social status seems now to be dependent on money, whereas 'in the past there were four kinds of social status: officials, intellectuals, herders, and workers. They have all gone. Now there is only rich and poor' (*sum* official in Humphrey & Sneath 1999: 111). Two strong stereotypes prevail among Mongolians: the very rich have become so by being smart, having connection, relying on nepotism and dubious business, while the poor are poor due to laziness or deemed bad persons by the deities. Although *zud* is recognized as an external force, poverty caused by *zud* may still be ascribed to one's own shortcomings or actions. For herders this means that families are responsible for poverty regardless of *zud* and migration to the urban areas is based on their own failures. Most migrants to Ulaanbaatar and other urban centres are confronted with poor living conditions, unemployment, poverty, and are often stigmatized as having failed. The need to show others that this is not the case causes many individuals to try to signal wealth at the expense of food and warm clothing for the family. The new setting, the new social relations, new ways to secure a living for both women and men, and new practical gender roles in the household based on these new circumstances, cause gender relations to change.

The unbalanced gender relations that have developed are not a deliberate struggle of women or men to do better than the other, but rather a result of conflicting strategies to secure a better life. It is impossible to tell if or how these shifting gender relations will find a balance with the many single headed families, the divorced, the single, those in *nuuts amrag* relationships, the in-migrants and the 'waiting families' with spouses who are looking for work or better work. This all depends on how alternative family types are accepted not only by law but also by society as a whole. With the levels of crime and poverty there is worry about safety even within families and great competition for jobs in society. There is very little energy for women and men to create more balanced gender relations without having economic opportunities to secure a livelihood.

Notes

1 There is variation in the definitions of rural and urban. The numbers used by UNFPA (*Micro Study of Internal Migration of Mongolian population,* 2001) for the urban population includes 44 city, *aimag* and *sum* centres with a total population of 1,345,160 or 56.6 per cent. As *sums* (with large herding populations) are included in this number, there will be uncertainty that only the remaining 1,134,700 or 43.4 per cent are herders. Many herders, usually women, live part time in urban centres while children attend boarding school. Some sum residents may also – as a recent phenomenon – work as hired herders for periods of time. The UNDP HDI uses a definition that identifies urban as 'cities based on high population density, sustainable regular activities such as industry and trade, and highly developed infrastructure' (UNDP 2003: 21). This definition sees urbanization only in Ulaanbaatar and the three largest cities, acknowledging the rest of the country, including *aimag* centres and large *sum* centres, as rural. However, many Mongolians and researches alike see *aimag* centres as urban although even some *aimag* residents are semi-herders. The numbers on rural-urban populations therefore vary and sources may not be specific about definitions.

2 The Rural Sector Gender Responsive Survey by questionnaire interviewed 1,085 people, of whom 658 were employed across Dornod, Omnogov and Bayankhongor. Report prepared for the UNIFEM/UNDP SPPD on Rural Sector Review in Mongolia. Ulaanbaatar: NSO.

3 Personal communication: factory worker, Oyunzul, also historian MA, aged 35, three children, husband seeking work overseas as illegal immigrant.

4 Personal communication: M. Erdenechimeg, Executive Director, Mongolian Development Centre.

5 The vast majority of educational staff is female (75 per cent) while school principals are usually men. In the administration of school affairs, *aimag* education administration, directors 19 out of 22 are male (1998).

6 The most recent Mongolian Statistical Yearbook (2003) has very few gender-specific data.

7 I have no statistics on this but refer to knowledge of approximately 200 Mongolian asylum-seekers in Denmark and 450 in Norway in 2000, when these countries held good reputations amongst asylum-seekers. Mongolian asylum-seekers are known in all North European countries.

8 Unpublished draft handbook: *Ways for prevention of domestic violence.* Ulaanbaatar. 2003.

9 Personal communication: B. Bataa, NGO gender consultant.

10 See Bold 2001.

11 E.g. an idealised 'ethnographic presence' of Mongol society or a politico-cultural critique of current affairs.

12 Such changes roughly mark the periods of pre-empire, the empire of Chinggis Khan, the post-empire period, the Manchu dynasty with its heavy Buddhist-Lamaist influence, and the years of independence and revolution between 1911–1924.

13 Research took place in three communities in Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia and Manchuria in 1920 and 1930 and interviews were compiled with key informants between 1949 and 1952 among three Mongolian tribes (one of which is Halh) in the 1930s.

14 The first dissemination of Buddhism occurred in the beginning of the 13th century and did not root itself among the Mongol tribes; the second wave of Buddhist influence spread through the Lamaist Gelugpa (Yellow Cap) sect at the end of the 16th century.

15 The gross degeneration of women's position is further seen in the practice of trying to stop the 'sinful flow of blood' after childbirth. Here – according to Baabar – a mix of the 'nine dirtiest things' such as dog hair and mold was placed into the womb of the woman, often causing infertility or death (Baabar 1999: 302).

16 The status of women and men in the socialist period was ideally equal; at least the Soviet 1918 Code of Law abolished the inferior position of women.

17 An unofficial list of the 2004 Parliament elections lists only three women, i.e. 2.28 per cent (www.opensocietyforum.mn).

18 According to common, perhaps romantic, knowledge men in traditional Mongol society could only taste alcohol at the age of 40 (*duch hurch dungoj ams*), take only little at 50 (*tavij yy* = put on the table), and at 60 enjoy a drink (*jar gaj yy*) (personal communication: D. Altangerel).

19 The survey appears to be of an urban population of both sexes.

20 (Personal communication: Erdenechimeg (Executive director NGO), Oyuntsetseg (UN programme manager), Darihand (sociologist) 2002).

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6

The Rural and the Urban in Pastoral Mongolia

David Sneath

The urban has come to occupy a particular position in Mongolian culture, which continues to be represented as rooted in traditions of nomadic pastoralism.[1] Although pastoralists and their ruling élites frequently had antagonistic relations with the great urban cultures of China, and conceived of their own lifestyles in contrast to Chinese urban and agricultural life, there was a long history of indigenous centers of power within pastoral Mongolian society itself. As Mongolian elite culture adopted Buddhism and became incorporated into the Manchu (Qing) state, however, these centers of power became increasingly identified with fixed structures, that is monastic and urban centers. Mongolian notions of the rural and the urban can be seen to be rooted in these histories and reflect the unique nature of relations between pastoral and urban lifestyles.

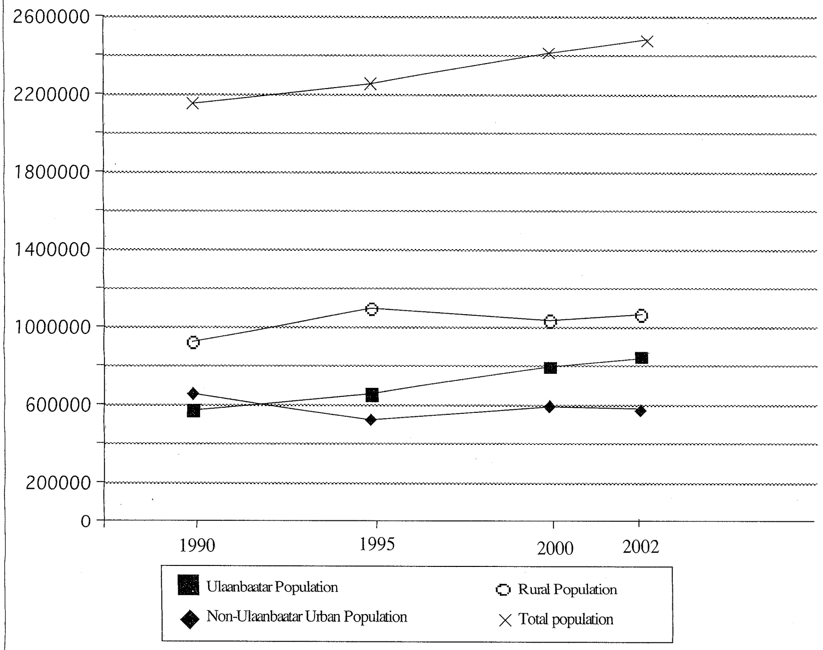
Mongolian culture has inherited distinctive sets of notions, dispositions and institutions oriented towards the rural, local and domestic on the one hand, and towards centers, élites and political structures on the other. State socialism invested massively in urban and industrial centers and the ways of life associated with them; making the identification between political centers, élites, and the city even stronger.

As a heuristic device, this chapter identifies two integrated complexes of norms, values and skills. One of these reflects the interests of the political elite, and is oriented towards urban and political centers, and the other which is based upon the day-to-day concerns of common pastoralists, and is oriented towards the domestic unit, subsistence tasks and local relations. The first is termed 'elite-centralist', and the second 'rural-localist'. These complexes resemble Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* in some ways.[2] Bourdieu (1972) notes that the cognitive structures of the *habitus* are shaped by the relations of domination, and in turn they reproduce them, and this is also a central feature of the process that I wish to describe. However, elite-centralist and rural-localist complexes are not mutually exclusive. Most Mongolians are acquainted with both to some extent, although lifestyle, occupation and personal inclination tend to privilege one over the other in terms of the personal orientation of individuals. The relationship between these two conjectural poles of the cultural spectrum can be thought of as 'symbiotic' because in many ways they are complementary, reflecting and reinforcing each other. However, it is helpful to separate them analytically so as to describe recurrent themes in Mongolian social change. This dualistic treatment of rural and the urban culture should not be seen as any sort of reformulation of modernization theory in which the urban comes to stand for 'modern' and the rural is understood as 'traditional'.[3] These contrasting cultural sectors are both 'traditional' in the sense that they resemble historical predecessor forms. Both are also contemporary and subject to change, although this has tended to be noticeably less rapid in the case of the 'rural-localist' sector.[4]

The 1990s saw Mongolia plunged into economic crisis. At the beginning of the decade the state launched a series of reforms designed to introduce a market economy, but for a number of reasons living standards collapsed. Urban families faced soaring prices, declining urban services and amenities, and increasing unemployment as state industries closed. Rural families have struggled to cope amid rapidly rising food and transportation prices, and the recent dissolution of the pastoral collectives created a series of problems for pastoral households.

What we see in Mongolia at present is two apparently contradictory trends. On the one hand increasing de-urbanization; a decline in urban centers throughout much of the country, buildings and apartment blocks abandoned in favour of traditional felt tents (*ger*), a decline in urban and industrial occupations, an increasing number of people returning to pastoralism, a decline of mechanization, an increased use of animal transport, the decay of schools, clinics and so on. On the other hand we see a new form of market-driven urbanization – an increasing flow of people moving in to the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, most of whom swell the ranks of the great districts of *ger*s where about 40 per cent of the city population now live. These trends are reflected in national statistics shown in Figure 1. In the face of steadily rising total national population, the number of urban dwellers outside Ulaanbaatar has fallen from 1990 to 2002, and the rural population, after an initial rise in the early 1990s, has not increased since then. The population of Ulaanbaatar, however, has increased throughout the period. An explanation of these changes requires an examination of the nature of urban life in Mongolia and how it has developed in relation to the pastoral lifestyle that surrounds it. The collapse of the Soviet-inspired State socialist political and economic order, which had supported the smaller urban centers, is the immediate cause of these trends. But at a deeper level one can see that urban and rural life-

Figure 1: Mongolian Urban and Rural Population 1990–2002.



Source: National Statistical Office of Mongolia 2002, 2003.

styles occupy particular places in Mongolian culture; indeed these form part of enduring sets of relations between complexes of values, norms, and knowledges – between the different ways of being Mongolian. These have become increasingly polarized in the last few decades and seem set to diverge in the future.

Historical Centre-Rural Relations in the Pre-Soviet Era

Mongolians trace the origins of the their nation to the polity founded by Chinggis Khan in the early 13th century, in which common pastoralists were ruled by an aristocratic elite. The nobility was necessarily oriented towards the political center – the Khan and his court – their social position, both as aristocrats and officials, was dependent upon their genealogical and political relationship with the ruling house of Chinggis Khan. Commoners, however, related to the political center almost entirely through their hereditary lords. They were tied to their administrative districts (Spuler 1972: 41),[5] and so, unlike the elite who were expected to travel to court, the commoners were generally bound to remain in their localities for much of their lives during peacetime, at the political periphery.[6] For centuries the primary political centers were great encampments; the entourages of steppe rulers, made up of hundreds or thousands of tents.[7] Those that became sufficiently large and complex tended to become fixed settlements with buildings, workshops and agricultural fields. In the 13th century Chinggis Khan's capital of Karakorum grew into a city in this way, but this urban center faded away with the decline of the Chinggisid ruling house.

By the end of 16th century Buddhism had spread to most of Mongolia from Tibet, sponsored by rulers such as Altan Khan of the Tümed. The early leadership of the Buddhist church was inextricably linked to the ruling houses of Mongolia, at first virtually all of the senior reincarnations to the leading positions of the Buddhist church were discovered among the high nobility. As the political centers embraced Buddhism, so did those in the peripheries that were oriented towards them.[8] It took some time, however, for the pre-Buddhist 'shamanic' religion to be eliminated from the 'rural-localist' sector of the culture, indeed in some areas, such as remote Hövsgöl, elements of it are said to remain to this day. We know that Buddhist rulers such as Altan Khan had to use considerable force to suppress the old faith, killing and persecuting shamans, and burning their ritual objects.

One of the most striking consequences of the Buddhist era was the installation of the monastery as a central institution in Mongolian life. These became enormously important ritual, economic and political centers, and throughout the 18th and 19th centuries they formed the hubs of small but growing urban complexes. This new Buddhist centralist culture was also literate, having inherited the adapted Uighur script from earlier Mongolian traditions of state. Literacy was soon to become a major component of the centralist orientation, the knowledge and use of writing spread with the introduction of monasteries throughout the region.

In the 17th century the whole region came under the control of the powerful Manchu (Qing) empire. The ultimate political center now became the Manchu emperor and the Qing court in Beijing and the Mongolian aristocracy intermarried with the Manchu nobility. However, another, much more immediate political center remained in Mongolia, in the form of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu (Javdzandamba Hutagt), the head of the Buddhist church of Outer Mongolia, who had been instrumental in the Mongol submission to the Manchus in 1688.

The Manchu introduced the administrative division between Inner and Outer Mongolia and created local political centers in Uliastai, where the Manchu governor resided, and in Niislel Hüree, the seat of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu. In this period the Mongolian elite became increasingly oriented towards the center of power in Beijing, adopting elements of Manchu dress and lifestyle, and often aspiring to high office in the Qing court, particularly in the military. The commoners, however, largely retained the norms and values of 'rural-localist' pastoralism.

In the 18th and 19th centuries the settlements that did emerge were clusters of dwellings around centers established by the Buddhist church or Manchu state. Urga, which later became the present capital Ulaanbaatar, began life as the great encampment around the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu (See Campi, this volume). At first it remained mobile, a city of tents that moved every few years, and only around 1778 did it settle in the location where Ulaanbaatar now is.[9] The two other principal urban centers of the period, Uliastai and Hovd, were both founded as military camps, and became administrative centers later.[10] Alongside the various officials posted there by the Manchu court (*ambans*) the Mongolian nobles who ruled pastoral districts also maintained their own offices (*jasaa*) in these administrative centers, each with their own staff. These towns, and the other smaller settlements such as those of the monasteries, were also centers for trade where the Chinese merchant firms maintained shops. Around these establishments clustered craftsmen, farmers, petty traders, day labourers, impoverished vagrants and thieves. Apart from the various official buildings and Chinese shops, most of the dwellings were tents (*ger*) in small fenced enclosures, and a few humble houses made of mud-brick or wood.

As the Chinggisid Empire did before them, the Manchu-Mongol administration established fixed relay stations along important routes manned by households who supplied accommodation and steeds for travelers on official business. These, along with the various agricultural schemes established by monasteries and the Manchu State, were the other main sites for fixed settlements.

Representations of urban life reflected its association with various official institutions, and the despised vagrants and beggars (frequently represented in negative terms as lazy, thieving opportunists: Bawden 1968: 93, Gillmore 1893: 157). High status still attached to lords with their large encampments in the steppe; but, by the 19th century much of the nobility had permanent residences, as did almost all the senior lamas. The town, then, was the site of public duty, poverty, commerce and the wide range of consumer goods that had to be brought into the steppe from outside. It was there that many Mongolians encountered the Chinese, who had a reputation for sharp trading practices, and notions of the urban and rural continue to reflect these themes. The pastoral lifestyle is associated with authentic Mongolian culture, simplicity and tradition. The city is still regarded as the site of political power, foreign influences, chicanery and commerce.

Rural and central society was integrated by the sociopolitical order. Land, livestock and persons of the commoner class were constituent elements of the patrimonial domains of the ruling nobles and Buddhist monasteries that had been given similar estates. These administrative units, *hoshuu* or 'banners' operated as political economies in their own right. Commoners were assigned to different activities as *alb*, the customary obligations subjects owed to their rulers.

The pastoral system of an ecclesiastical *hoshuu* in what is now Bayanhongor *aimag* (province) provides an example of the way in which the administration integrated the monastic center and the pastoral steppe. In Bayanzürh Uulyn Hoshuu at least 70 per cent of the population were involved in herding the huge herds belonging to the monastery which governed the banner.[11] These subjects were divided into groups depending on the monastic livestock they were allocated, and assigned different seasonal movement routes to make best use of the pastures and conditions throughout the district. Specified amounts of livestock and produce was delivered to the monastery every year and the surplus kept by the herding households. Other monastic subjects were assigned the task of raising crops in the more fertile areas where this was viable, so the *hoshuu* also had its own supply of grain (Simukov,1936: 49–53).

Mongolian pastoralism involved a series of specialist artifacts, skills and techniques, most of which were located, learned and practised in the pastoral household (*örh* or *ail*). But these practices were utilized as part of wider sociopolitical system that included the framework of rights and obligations, both settled and mobile specialist activities. In the early 19th century the well-known nobleman, Prince Togtohtör (To-Wang), for example, attempted to establish water-mills, textile shops, mines, and tile and brick works in his *hoshuu*, and assigned subjects to work in these enterprises (Bawden 1968: 180). Togtohtör was unusually ambitious, and few *hoshuu* supported such a diverse range of activities. But his efforts reveal the importance of the lord of the banner in managing (and sometimes developing) his fief as an integrated economic unit.

In 1911 the Manchu Qing dynasty collapsed and Outer Mongolia declared its independence under the head of the Buddhist establishment, the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu. The Jebtsundamba, or Bogd Khan ('Holy King'), had his ecclesiastical seat at Urga, and this became the new capital. Although the official capital in the Qing period had been Uliastai (Ulyasutai), Urga was bigger, and had been treated as if it were the capital in many ways. The town itself was the hub of an ecclesiastical complex; 100 monasteries and temples of various sizes were located in the vicinity of Urga, with a total population of around 20,000 monks (Gilberg and Svantesson 1996: 21).

The revolutionary political and social upheavals of China and Russia began to present challenges to the old order; the political elite began to imbibe one form of the modernism that was to replace Buddhist patrimonialism as the dominant political philosophy.

In 1921 the Soviet-backed Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) wrested control of Urga from Baron Ungern-Sternberg, the opportunistic and apparently deranged commander of White-Russian forces who had seized the city a few months earlier. By 1924, after the death of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, the MPRP and its Soviet backers were firmly in control of the country. The name of Urga was changed to Ulaanbaatar, 'Red Hero,' to reflect the political loyalties of the new state (see Campi, this volume). The political philosophy of the new regime was a Mongolian variant of Soviet ideology, and was markedly modernist, based firmly on a belief in the superiority of a technological and institutional complex that resembled that of the most economically developed nations. In the Soviet case, of course, there is also the belief in inevitable and necessary progress towards 'socialism.'

The new revolutionary Mongolian elite rapidly identified the Buddhist establishment as the only important indigenous rival to its power.[12] Its ruthless elimination of the monasteries in the late thirties left the revolutionary government in undisputed control of the country, and its administrative and educational institutions quickly replaced those of the church. This was certainly not a smooth or uncontested process. In 1929 the MPRP launched a series of half-baked collectivisation policies (subsequently labeled the 'Leftist Deviation'), the shambolic results of which revealed that most local rural people regarded the revolutionary new politics of the centre with bewildered apathy or outright antipathy (Bawden 1968: 308–10). These attempts to simultaneously eliminate the monasteries and collectivize noble and monastic livestock led to widespread armed revolt, and the new state had to abandon its collectivization drive in 1932. But by the end of the decade the MPRP had effectively eliminated and discredited the Buddhist establishment. The fact that this was possible in a relatively short period of time is another example of the adaptability of the elite-centralist sector of the culture, and its articulated relation to the 'rural-localist' sector. Despite the enormous importance of Buddhism in popular culture, the new 'party of the state' used its political centrality to displace its rival. It managed to recruit over 30,000 members within a few years (Morozova 2002: 66), even though many of the early recruits had little or no interest in, or comprehension of, the content of its strange new political philosophy (Bawden 1968: 300). The articulated nature of this relationship meant that rural life survived this wholesale ideological change with minimal change in a number of respects. Historically, the orientation of the rural-local towards political centres has proved to be more enduring than the particular content of the 'regime of truth' that these centres represent.

Rural and Urban in the State-Socialist Era

The Mongolian State undertook an ambitious programme of urbanization and industrialization, supported by enormous investment from the Soviet Union.

Urbanization was extremely rapid. In the 1920s only a few per cent of the population lived in towns, but by the end of the 1980s 57 per cent of the population were urban (Statistical Office of Mongolia, 1993: 3, Gilberg and Svantesson 1996: 20). In 1935 the population of Urga was 10,400. Fifty years later (1985) it had become 50 times bigger (over half a million people), a quarter of the entire population of Mongolia (Gilberg and Svantesson 1996: 21).

The state socialist political system generated a local variant of the dominant Soviet political culture, and integrated the Mongolian elite, to some extent, into the national elite of the USSR. The new political culture was generated from a fusion of the dominant culture of the superpower and that of Mongolia. This was Marxist, modernist, and urban, oriented towards the political center in Moscow. These values were powerfully promoted by the educational system and the mass media, as well as the administrative discourse of the political class. However, it would be misleading to represent this field of knowledge as uniform and totalizing. A completely different series of values and dispositions coexisted with this center-focused complex; that of the rural-domestic orientation. Although offering contrasting aspirational content, notions of worth, aesthetic value, and personal fulfillment, they both continue to exist within a wider cultural frame that casts them as complimentary rather than contradictory, and are generally viewed as such by those drawn to either complex. Indeed, they are both held to be valid 'ways of being Mongolian' by most. The city is both advanced and sullied, rural life both backward and wholesome.

Early attempts to collectivize pastoralism in the early 1930s had been so unpopular that the programme was abandoned. In the 1950s and 60s, however, collectivization was introduced more gradually and successfully. The territory of Mongolia was divided into over 300 rural districts (*sum*), and most of these supported a single collective farm (*negdel*) which controlled land-use and raised livestock in line with state planning. Some districts had state farms instead (*sangiin aj ahui*), including the regions that carried out large-scale crop production. The *sum* generally consisted of a central settlement of a few hundred households and a large area of grassland in which pastoral households kept livestock, living in felt tents (*ger*) and moving to different seasonal pastures in an annual cycle. These families herded the collective or state farm livestock alongside a smaller number of their own personal animals. The collectives also owned machinery for transportation and hay-cutting services that were used to support pastoral households.

An essential element of the thinking behind these programmes was a Leninist commitment to the integration of urban and rural life. Alongside the collectivization campaign went a programme to establish urban centers in each of the rural districts (*sums*). Many of these *sum* and *aimag* (province) settlements were located on the sites of old monasteries which often had housed the first revolutionary local government offices. Physically then, as well as culturally, the Party and state institutions of the new elite occupied the place of the old in rural life.

The *negdel* collectives and *sum* local governments became vehicles for bringing a number of supposed benefits associated with the town to pastoralists in every district. Each *sum* center had a school, medical clinic, post office, collective headquarters and motor pool, police station, local government offices, and housing for families based there. These centers also maintained a *soyolyn ordon* (cultural palace) which hosted visiting entertainers and lecturers, and showed films (see Marsh, this volume). These became important social centers, and have been sorely missed in many districts where they closed in the 1990s, along with other local services, as a result of reform.

The last few decades has seen an increasing separation and contrast between the value systems of the urban and rural orientations. They can now almost be considered two distinct sub-cultures. The modernist-centralist scheme that emerged during the state socialist period valued educational achievement as a route to the lifestyle and values of the urban center. The aspirational direction was toward occupations in government, academia, the military, and industry. High position in the administration was allocated the highest status, along with heroic national figures such as cosmonauts. Lower but worthy status was assigned to workers in industry and agriculture, and these should be interested in introducing new technological innovations wherever possible. The appeal was relatively non-gender specific; although senior Party posts were still largely held by older men, the espoused ideology was one of gender-neutral meritocracy.

The rural-localist subculture's normative framework emphasized competence at a range of rural skills and capabilities. Most of these skills remain subject to the traditional division of labour and although there is some overlap there are different repertoires for the two genders. Those appropriate for men are mostly concerned with herding the more distant animals, while women's skills are largely centered on the household. Tough, uncomplaining reliability is highly valued, along with the inclination and ability to help family and friends. Aspirations are multiplex and tend to change with age. For young men, for example, wrestling, breaking horses and hunting are often particularly valued, for older men the ownership of large numbers of livestock, particularly racing horses. Young women are respected for being skilled, helpful, polite and well-dressed; and older women for having many children and a prosperous lifestyle. A wide network of friends and kin is particularly valued in both rural and urban contexts. In the state socialist period virtually all children attended school, but within a given pastoral household different children often had very different trajectories. Some, generally the most educationally able, would aspire to higher education, leading to administrative and urban salaried positions. Others were considered to have a stronger interest in, or aptitude for, rural sub-culture and look to pastoralism or other 'traditional' rural occupations.

The 'Age of the Market'

The political changes that swept through the Soviet Union and its satellite states in the early 1990s thrust Mongolia into an era of economic reform. The government launched a series of policies designed to create a market economy based on private property. The economic advice that former Soviet-block nations received resembled the stabilization and structural reform packages recommended for poor countries by the IMF and the World Bank in the 1970s and 1980s (Nolan, 1995: 75). It included price liberalization, cutting state subsidies and expenditure, currency convertibility, privatization of public assets and the rapid introduction of markets.

These policy recommendations were based on the notion of a 'transition' from what was seen as an inefficient and moribund centrally-planned economy to the presumed efficiency and dynamism of the free market. The aim of reform was to 'emancipate' the economy from the political structure, and allow it to assume its latent 'natural' form, composed of private property and the market. This market economy, it was assumed, would tend to generate growth if given the chance. A bright economic future was predicted for Mongolia at that time. The government talked of the country becoming the fifth Asian Tiger within five years (Odgaard 1996: 113). In 1991 Mongolia began a huge programme to privatize state and collective enterprises through the issue of share coupons (*tasalbar*). In rural districts the reforms included the dissolution of the collectives (*negdel*) and later most of the state farms (*sangiin aj ahui*) which managed the bulk of pastoral and agricultural production.

The 'Age of the Market' (*zah zeeliin üye*) as Mongolians called the post-socialist period, saw Mongolia plunged into economic crisis. The worst disruption occurred in the early 1990s when incomes plummeted. The World Bank estimated that real wages halved between 1990 and 1992, and then declined by a further third in 1993.[13] Official figures showed that income- poverty increased from almost zero in 1989 to 27 per cent in 1994 (Griffin, 1995: 31–33, and World Bank 1994: 35) and a 1998 survey of living standards suggested that over 33 per cent of Mongolians were living below the poverty line (United Nations Systems in Mongolia, 1999: 5). Social services were cut; real expenditure on health services decreased by 43 per cent from 1990 to 1992, and the education budget was cut by 56 per cent (World Bank, 1994: 41, Robinson 1995: 4). Further reductions followed and social service spending has remained low since that time (United Nations Systems in Mongolia, 1999: 5). The official figures for unemployment increased rapidly in the early 1990s, and actual unemployment was estimated at 15 per cent in 1997 (CIA 1998).[14] The rate of inflation shot up and stayed in triple figures from 1991 to 1993, before gradually falling to around 8 per cent in 2000 (National Statistical Office of Mongolia 2003: 97).

In part this economic crisis was the result of the loss of Soviet aid (some estimates suggest this amounted to as much as a third of GDP or more)[15] which was reduced in 1989 and stopped altogether in 1991. The Soviet trading block, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance also collapsed at this time, and Mongolian trade fell dramatically (exports declined from 832 million USD in 1989 to 370 million in 1991). However, to some extent the place of Russia as aid donor and economic advisor was taken over by western nations, Japan, and international financial institutions. Between them these donors provided support equivalent to about 15 per cent of GDP in 1991 and 1992 (Griffin, 1995: 6) and by 1996 official aid had risen to represent 25 per cent of GDP (Bruun and Odgaard, 1996: 26). Levels of aid dependency have remained high and in 2001 aid was still more than 20 per cent of GDP (National Statistical Office of Mongolia 2003: 87, 297). The loss of Soviet aid, then, can only be held partially responsible for Mongolia's crisis. As Griffin (1995: 12–13) argues, one of the reasons for the severity of the economic collapse was the nature of the reform policies carried out at the time, in particular the rapid privatization programme.

The situation stabilized to some extent in the mid 1990s, with GDP seeing some positive growth in the second half of the decade. But living standards remain well below those in the socialist era.[16] At the end of a decade of market-oriented reform Mongolia's national economy is heavily dependent on a handful of export commodities: copper from a remaining Russian-Mongolian joint mining venture at Erdenet, gold, and cashmere. The economy has become increasingly reliant on pastoralism, which in 1998 accounted for 88 per cent of the total output of agriculture. The relative importance of the agricultural sector increased as the other sectors of the economy declined. In 1989 agriculture contributed just 16 per cent of total GDP, for example, but by 2000 this had risen to 33 per cent (National Statistical Office of Mongolia 2001: 82).

In rural districts the dissolution of the collectives began in 1991 and was complete by 1993 with most of the livestock and other agricultural resources becoming the private property of the members of the collectives. However the pastoral economy could not be simply and successfully 'emancipated' from the sociopolitical structure with which it has, historically, long been linked. The effect of decollectivization was to collapse the large-scale pastoral operations that the collectives had organized, and expand the primarily subsistence-oriented small scale economies of pastoral households. This meant a loss of a number of economies of scale that the collectives had provided, in particular mechanized transportation and supplies of winter fodder. It also dismantled the state procurement system which had provided Mongolian urban consumers and industries with relatively cheap and reliable supplies of pastoral produce and given pastoralists guaranteed markets for their products.

Decollectivization eliminated the jobs of most of the workers in the *sum* centers. They were given a share of the collective's assets, in most cases livestock, with which to make their living, so that the number of people relying directly on pastoralism increased dramatically. The number of registered herders has more than trebled since reforms began, from 135,420 in 1989 (less than 18 per cent of the national workforce) to 407,030 in 2001, almost 50 per cent of the working population (National Statistical Office of Mongolia 2002: 66, 145, Statistical Office of Mongolia 1993: 6). This change appears to be an enduring aspect of reform, as there is little prospect of rapid growth in employment in other sectors of the economy, indeed, the number of jobs in manufacturing, industry, construction, transport and communication have all declined by around 25–50 per cent since 1990. The only sector of the economy, other than pastoralism, that saw an increase in employment was wholesale and retail trade, and this remains small, accounting for 10.8 per cent of national workforce in 2001, a relatively modest increase over its level of 7 per cent in 1989 (Statistical Office of Mongolia 1993: 7; National Statistical Office of Mongolia 1999: 45).

This is also affecting the patterns of pastoral land-use as many of these 'new herders' still have dwellings in the settlement at the *sum* center and tend to be much less mobile that the established pastoral households who were part of specialized herding brigades in the collective. A common coping strategy is for such households from the center to pasture their livestock relatively near to the settlement during the summer months, and then have some or all of their livestock herded by relatives or friends among the pastoral families in more distant pastures for the rest of the year. The effects of these changes on grassland ecosystems have yet to be seen, but recent research from Inner Mongolia and other regions where pastoralism has become sedentary suggests that lower livestock mobility in these conditions is more damaging to pasture land (Tserendash & Erdenebaatar, 1993: 9–15, Humphrey & Sneath 1995: 8–13, Williams, 1996: 307–303).

In the past the cheap fuel that the Soviet Union had supplied to Mongolia had meant that mechanical transport, a key factor in such a huge and thinly populated country, was affordable and widely available to local government, national services and productive enterprises alike. As the price of petrol increased rapidly in the nineties, transportation became increasingly expensive and links between the scattered rural population and urban centers have declined. Medical and veterinary treatment is now much less accessible for most pastoralists, and it has become more costly and difficult to visit kin in the towns.

The collectives used to cut hay mechanically, using tractors, and then distribute it by truck to pastoral households for use as winter fodder. Since decollectivization individual households have had to cut hay by hand as best they can, and transport it themselves, often using animal carts. This is physically demanding work, and households without active adult members or the money to buy hay find it difficult or impossible to gain sufficient winter fodder for their animals.

In the collective period the pastoralists were often moved on the longest legs of their annual migration by collective truck, which greatly eased the difficulty of these distant movements. The dissolution of the collective motor pools and the increase in fuel costs have made seasonal movement much more difficult for most pastoral families, who have increasingly had to rely on animal transport. This is one of the reasons for a general decline in the amount of pastoral movement. There has also been a reduction in the regulation of access to pasture, which had been overseen by collective and state farm officials. Many herding families have become less inclined to make arduous, long-distance moves between seasonal pastures, not only because of the difficulty of transportation but, in some cases, for fear that their best pastures may be used by others if they vacated them.

Pastoral livelihoods became increasingly insecure and herd managers have had to worry about maintaining basic food supplies for their families. This made many of them unwilling to sell more than a minimum number of livestock, in case they may need them for food in the future. High inflation also damaged pastoralists confidence in the security of cash savings, so that accumulating livestock became an important goal for most livestock owners. This was one reason for the increase in livestock numbers throughout most of the 1990s. From 1990 to 1998 the national herd had increased by over 20 per cent from 25.9 to 31.9 million head (Statistical Office of Mongolia, 1993: 28; Ministry of Agriculture and Industry of Mongolia, 1998: 2). Despite the increase in livestock numbers, however, the efficiency of pastoralism has declined since decollectivization. Survival rates of offspring have fallen by around 10 per cent. However, the numbers of livestock consumed and marketed has declined even more dramatically (by about 20 per cent), so that livestock totals rose nevertheless (National Statistical Office of Mongolia 1999: 83–84). Far from being able to market and purchase more than in the past, many pastoral households are increasingly subsisting on their own produce and marketing only their surplus (if they have any), particularly wool and cashmere, which they can collect without losing livestock.

The pastoral sector is now atomized and largely devoted to subsistence production. Many herders find it difficult to continue to make the seasonal moves that the collectives had supported. In some regions the tendency of pastoralists to stay all year near their best pastures has been exacerbated by insecurity over rights to use pasture land, which used to be enforced by the collectives.

Decollectivisation has made Mongolian pastoralism highly vulnerable to the adverse climatic conditions. In the unusually severe winters of 1999–2001 six million livestock were lost, almost a fifth of the national total. By 2002 the national livestock total had fallen to 23.9 million, almost 10 million lower than its peak in 1999 of 33.6 million (National Statistical Office of Mongolia, 2003: 138). Across the country some two thousand households were left without any livestock whatever after the first winter, and many more saw their livelihoods destroyed in the second. These *zud* (disasters caused by sever weather) were the result of unusually dry summers followed by savagely cold winters in which temperatures dropped as low as -46C. However, such harsh climatic conditions are known to occur from time to time, and the collectives had developed a number of measures including coordinated movements and deliveries of fodder that had kept losses reasonably low and protected herder's incomes. The scale of the recent livestock losses, and the underlying problem of barely viable herding households, reflects the weakness of the atomized and demechanized pastoral sector that has emerged in Mongolia's era of 'transition.'

The most striking transition that rural Mongolia has experienced has been from a middle-income to a poor country, as if the process of development had been thrown into reverse. This is certainly how pastoralists I knew in Gov'sumber and Hövsgöl *aimag*s saw it, and most of them had become understandably nostalgic for the collectivist past. They described the country as having lost decades of improvement, with conditions beginning to resemble the 1940s.

De-Urbanization and the Expanding City

Another aspect of the recent changes has been a process of de-urbanization. The old regime had promoted the particular Soviet form of urbanization, fostering the rapid growth of cities and towns, and establishing settlements in the *sum* centers. The post-socialist economic crisis was particularly destructive for activities associated with urban lifestyles, such as office and industrial employment and health and educational services which had been heavily reliant on the Soviet connection. The collapse of formerly State-run enterprises and the dissolution of the pastoral collectives threw thousands of employees out of work, forcing many of them to herd livestock to make a living. This helped create a flow of people from urban centers into rural districts. From 1992 to 1995 the urban population declined by around 4 per cent (50,000 people), while the rural population increased by over 15 per cent (150,000).[17] Since then this trend has receded somewhat. By 1998 the total urban population had crept back to a little more than its 1990 value (1.2 million), and by 2001 it had risen to nearly 1.4 million. However, this has been in the face of a steady rise in the population of Ulaanbaatar, and the urban population outside the capital was still 10 per cent lower in 2001 that in 1990, at 585,000 (see figure 1).

It is recognized that the growth of Ulaanbaatar has been the result of difficulties of making a living in rural districts. The capital city appears to many Mongolians to be the one place that still has some money and offers some economic opportunities, particularly in the informal sector. Between 1991–1998, 70,000 people moved to Ulaanbaatar,[18] and since then the flow has quickened. In the following three years more than 50,000 people moved to the capital, swelling the population to over 812,000 by 2001.

Although Ulaanbaatar had grown rapidly throughout the state socialist period, this was a very different flow of people, carefully regulated by the government and directed towards the employment needs of various state industries. Unauthorized migration to the city was firmly restricted. The new form of urbanization is market-driven and very much unplanned. Indeed it is widely felt to be undesirable, and is associated with increased vagrancy and crime. Most of the new urban immigrants move into the districts of felt tents (*ger*) in small wooden enclosures on the outskirts of the city, where around 40 per cent of the population now live, some 270,000 people or more. Under the old regime the plan had been to shrink these districts and re-house all the inhabitants in new built accommodation by 2010. Now there is no prospect of this; the present government and international aid organizations aim only at expanding electricity and water supplies in these districts, and perhaps putting in a new sewerage system.

The other important feature of the new form of urbanism is that rather than urban life coming to the rural, as it did in the old regime, now rural lifestyles appear in the city. New migrants to Ulaanbaatar frequently lack waged employment and many struggle to keep some livestock for subsistence (Janzan, Enkhtsetseg & Bat-Ochir 2001: 236). The number of livestock within the (expansive) city limits of Ulaanbaatar has increased to an estimated 300,000 in recent years and there are reports that this is causing pastoral degradation.

Within the rural localities the economic crisis has created a decline in almost all the occupations associated with urban life (Gundsambuu 2001: 194–195). In Renchinlhümbe *sum*, north Mongolia, for example, about half the working population were employed in non-pastoral occupations in the collective period. When the collective closed most of the residents became directly dependent on livestock for their subsistence – over 70 per cent of the population were officially classed as herders in 1996, and over 20 per cent were classed as unemployed. Only 6.5 per cent of the *sum* population were employed in non-pastoral sectors.

As the government reduced education funding teachers' salaries and morale dropped. Schooling the children of mobile pastoral families had posed some difficulties for the state socialist regime, but these had been largely overcome by the provision of boarding facilities for children during term time. By 1996 this system was in crisis, and where school boarding facilities still operated it had become usual for herding families to be charged a sheep for each child staying in the dormitories. This livestock was sold to finance the food and fuel necessary to feed the children while they are away from their families. In the district of Hanh (the neighbouring *sum* to Renchinlhümbe), for example, the secondary school had been forced to stop teaching the final year of school education (the 10th grade) to reduce its costs. Most people had developed a sort of despondent resignation to the decline in standards, although one local administrator did complain bitterly to me about the miserable food that the schoolchildren were having to eat.

Representations of Urban and Rural Life

Recently a popular Mongolian comedy television programme showed a young urban couple who found themselves unexpectedly visited by the husband's country cousin. Having failed to persuade his urban relative to come out drinking or riding with him, the young herdsman sits disconsolately on the floor of the well-furnished apartment, staring listlessly at the horseracing and wrestling on television, and dreaming of his family on the steppe. When the embarrassed silence begins to stretch, his host disappears into the kitchen to help his wife prepare a meal and discuss ways and means of getting their guest to leave. The herdsman is temporarily cheered when his hosts return, beaming, to announce that the meal is ready. But the final scene shows the hungry herdsman staring, crestfallen, at a beautifully presented, but entirely alien, green salad.

Although the appeal of the city has a powerful draw for some rural people, particularly the young, there are many who openly prefer the pastoral lifestyle.

'We like it because we are continuously moving and living in clean fresh air,' was a typical comment by a middle-aged herder I knew in Gov'sumber *aimag*, Southern Mongolia, 'we couldn't live in the city' his wife added. Like other pastoralists I knew, the couple complained that they got headaches if they stayed in the city, and felt short of air. Pastoralists talked of the beauty of their natural surroundings, that they couldn't imagine living in the city in 'cages.' They also stressed, with some pride, that rural children grew up hard-working, warm-hearted, practical and competent at a wide range of tasks, unlike city children who (despite their educational opportunities) they thought of as prone to laziness and acquisitive and faddish consumerism. Since the collapse of the social control enforced by the old regime, in the 1990s the city also became associated (or perhaps reassociated) with vice and crime, a perception that was shared by many urbanites who felt increasingly threatened. However, problems of lawlessness are a much more general problem, even if they are felt most acutely in the city. Rustling and livestock-theft also became a serious problem in rural districts in a way that would have been unthinkable in the eighties.

Urban representations of rural life are mixed and uneven. Certain aspects are commonly valorized – a perceived closeness to nature, hospitality and sincerity, and the association with the ancient roots of a distinctive and glorious national culture. The poet Ch. Battømør (2003) for example, writes of the loss of this integrity and generosity in his mournful poem *Bi Hotyn Hün* ('I'm a city person') in which he evokes traditional rural values by their negation in his lament of urban life. On the other hand, a widely-disseminated aspect of elite-centralist thought conceives of 'culture' (*soyol*) in terms of a gradient of refinement and sophistication. In this discourse rural people are depicted as having a low 'cultural level / standard' (*soyolyn hemjee*), whereas high education and the social milieu of the great cities bestows 'high culture.' Rural culture is often denigrated for the very traditionality that is celebrated in other contexts, and the pastoral lifestyle is commonly described in terms of poverty and backwardness (Baatar 2000: 131)

Urban (hotyn) and rural (hödöönii) settings are frequently spoken of as contrasting categories. Urban living, particularly in the cities proper of Ulaanbaatar, Erdenet and Darhan, is extraordinarily different from pastoral lifestyles, with a range of conveniences far beyond pastoral expectations – central heating, electricity, hot water, TV, telephone, public transport and so on. Despite these many contrasts, however, most Mongolians are familiar with both lifestyles to some extent. Social and kinship networks cross the boundaries between the rural and the urban so that virtually all pastoralists have urban relatives and friends. The speed with which urbanization had been carried out in the 1950s–1970s meant that most urban residents at that time had been born in rural localities, and the large families usually contained rural and urban members. Rural exposure to global and national television and other media images has not increased very markedly over the last decade; the decline in incomes slowed the rate at which rural families bought televisions. But more or less slowly, television imagery is becoming more accessible throughout the country, making rural residents virtual, if not physical, participants in urban life.

Within a rural district (*sum*) the mobile households remain closely linked to those in the central settlement, creating a social field that includes both mobile and settled life. In the collective period various sum-based institutions such as state farms, collectives, schools, health and administrative centers helped integrate settled and pastoral society. People moved to and from mobile and settled sections of these rural institutions, and the children circulated, pastoral children staying in the settlement to attend school, children from the settlements staying with their pastoral relatives in the summer. In some respects almost all the members of the rural collectives, settled and mobile, were pastoral, in that they were intimately involved with pastoral activities, although these were principally carried out by the specialist herding households. In this way it makes better sense to speak of a society with a mobile sector, than of a separate mobile pastoral society. This is still largely true, kinship and friendship relations continue to knit *sum* society together. But in the case of the true urban centers, the cities (Ulaanbaatar, Erdenet, Darhan,) and *aimag* center towns, this interconnectedness seems set to diminish as transportation costs rise, and economic integration and school attendance falls.

Conclusion

History has left Mongolia with contrasting ways of life that have virtually become sub-cultures, and this polarization is not diminishing as a result of the collapse of the old Communist regime that helped shape their current forms. The new market modernism appears to be having just as powerful an ideological impact as its Soviet predecessor, and the association between 'the modern' and the urban remains. As with previous epochs, in the post-socialist period change in the elite-centralist wing of the culture has been more rapid, with some noticeable change in the content of the aspirational scheme. Well-paid positions in management have generally become the most attractive vocations, and for much of the new elite occupations with western international connections have become even more desirable than those with Russian ones. In the capital city, where most foreigners live, a growing leisure industry supports bars and nightclubs, and this has become an attractive sector to many young Mongolians. Small-scale commerce has become a central activity for many urbanites, but it is generally still held in low regard and valued for the goods it provides rather than as an occupation in its own right.

There is a strong tendency for the children of those with urban occupations and higher education to seek and attain high levels of education themselves (Ward 1995: 33–40). As state schooling provision declines, educational opportunities have become increasingly limited to those already financially and educationally advantaged. Substantial fees are now payable for university and college education, for example, and this puts them beyond the reach of many Mongolians. Given that the costs of education are increasing, a common strategy for rural families is to select only some of their children to pursue education, and to take others out of school early to concentrate on pastoral work.

This trend does not, of course, reduce the attraction that urban life holds for many with rural backgrounds. Indeed the attraction of Ulaanbaatar in particular has led to an expanding sector that we might term the 'urban periphery'. The *ger* district is a form of urbanism with only some of the characteristics and amenities associated with the ideal urban lifestyle. This is by no means a new or unique lifestyle and many *aimag* and *sum* centers have long had substantial *ger* districts, but these had been seen as areas in the process of being fully urbanized and replaced with built accommodation. Now the urban periphery has become the most rapidly expanding part of the metropolis.

Although it seems that the rural and the more elite urban sub-cultures are becoming more exclusive and entrenched, this polarity has not yet developed to the extent that most individuals locate themselves in either of the two cultural sectors exclusively. These sets of values and skills coexist and may be emphasized to a greater or lesser extent by individuals as context demands. Although they may live in the city, for example, many of the older government and MPRP Party administrators appear to be at least as familiar with 'rural-localism' as they are with 'modernist-centralism'. Indeed, one reason, I would suggest, for the 2000 electoral success of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party has been their greater access to, and use of, rural-localist value-systems.[19] As these cultural sectors polarize, however, under the influence of global media and the international education of the young Mongolian elite, individuals with a comprehensive command of both complexes become rarer.

Notes

1 Mongolia's urban settlements have been shaped by the nation's relationship with Russia, and most of the buildings are unmistakably Russian or Soviet in style. Some remnants of the earlier Qing period architecture, Chinese and Tibetan style buildings, can be found however, mostly former monasteries or official residences for high officials or lamas.

2 They could also be described as 'a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed towards acting as structuring structures' Bourdieu 1972: 72.

3 Modernisztion theories, such as that developed by Talcott Parsons, base their approach on the distinction between 'traditional' and 'modern' social forms. They argue that to successfully develop their economies, underdeveloped societies must have institutions created that fulfil the functions that economic and social institutions perform in the West. See Hoogvelt 1978: 51–66.

4 The use of firearms for hunting, and recreational use of distilled alcohol have been part of the value-system of this complex for some time, for example, but were introductions and represent an aspect of its gradual change.

5 Spuler argues that the laws of Chinggis Khan decreed that 'Nobody shall leave the unit of a thousand, a hundred or ten to which he is assigned. Otherwise he himself, and the leader of the unit that has accepted him, shall be executed.'

6 In time of war, of course, male commoners of fighting age would leave their localities for extended periods of time, but the rest of the population, who reproduced Mongol society, remained behind.

7 I do not wish to imply that steppe society has ever been bounded, cut-off from the societies around it. Rather such centres existed in a wider set of social fields extending across the steppes of what is now Mongolia, and these were flexibly configured around political centres. The ultimate centres of power, towards which the elites are oriented, have often lain outside the steppe.

8 I do not mean to imply that rural-localist culture was not independently subject to external religious influences, but we have little historical evidence to illuminate the matter. There must have been converts among commoners serving their lords abroad or in urban centres, but such persons were located in the elite-centralist complex, rather than rural locales.

9 The history of the city is dated from 1639 when monastery was founded nearby, on the banks of the Shireet Lake.

10 Kyakhta, the other principal urban centre, grew as a result of politically-regulated trade relations with Russia, see Bawden 1968: 94.

11 Lamyn Gegen was the title of the reincarnate high lama (*hutagt*) who was the head of the monastery that also bore this name. Brown and Onon's map of the Bogd Haan period (1976: 880) names this as the banner of the subjects of Erdene Bandid Hutagt. Their map for 1925 gives the new (secular) name of the district as Bayanzürh Uulyn Hoshuu. Today the territory of the *hoshuu* is included in six sums of Bayanhongor *aimag*: Bayangov', Bayanlig, Bogd, Jinst, Ölziit, and Erdenetsogt. Simukov (1936: 49) notes that at its height the monastery owned more than 10,000 camels, as well as large numbers of other species of livestock. See Sneath 1999.

12 At first lamas had been included in government. Bodoo, for example, the first premier of the Mongolian revolutionary government, was a lama. He was executed in 1922 for being a 'counter-revolutionary'. See Sanders 1987: 28.

13 See World Bank 1994: 19. Griffin, (1995: viii) estimates the decline in average incomes at around 30 per cent over that period. IMF data suggest a smaller decline in average incomes of abour 25 per cent, see Griffin, 1995: 5. UNDP and Asian Development Bank estimates suggested a decline of 34 per cent in GNP per capita from 1989–92, see Griffin, 1995: 25.

14 Official figures show unemployment increase from 10,300 in 1989 to reach 80,000 in 1996, but an article in the Mongolian daily *Ardyn Erh* suggested that the true unemployment total approached 90,000. *Ardyn Erh*, No 193 (1411), 27 Sept. 1996.

15 Bruun and Odgaard, 1996: 26 give the estimate of 30 per cent, while some estimates are even higher; the United Nations Systems in Mongolia 1999: 6 estimates that this assistance represented, on average, 37 per cent of annual GDP.

16 As Odgaard (1996: 106–108) notes, there is significant variation in estimates of the decline in Mongolian GDP that has occurred since the reforms started, and these may be politically motivated. At face value the 1994 IMF and World Bank Mission estimates show the 1989 GDP to have been 3.6 billion (World Bank 1994: table 3.1), more than three times the level of 1.1 billion USD in 1998. However, it is thought that the 1989 figures, based on artificial exchange rates, overestimate the real GDP. Odgaard (1996: 105) gives estimates showing a decline in both National Income and in per capita GDP of 35 per cent from 1990 to 1993.

17 Statistical Office of Mongolia1993: 3.

18 President Bagabandi mentioned these figures in a public speech in March 1999.

19 N. Bagabandi, the MPRP candidate, easily won the 1997 presidential elections with more than twice the popular vote of his principal opponent, and the MPRP won a landslide victory in the 2000 parliamentary elections. Yet the 2004 parliamentary election resulted in a stalemate between MPRP and the Motherland-Democracy Coalition.

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7

Nomadic Herders and the Urban Attraction

Ole Bruun

Mongolia's general transition from a socialist form of production to a market economy after 1990 implied rapid decollectivization in the countryside. Another 'transition', with equally important consequences for the rural population but regretfully overlooked, was simultaneously carried out: from a policy of decentralized social and economic development under Soviet dependency to one of resolute urban prioritization under native Mongolian government, despite a comparable dependency on foreign aid.[1] Evidently, a massive population movement towards the central parts of the country was set in motion by structural problems in agriculture already in the mid-1990s. In particular, pastoral people were squeezed out of their native areas by the diminishing value of their produce when measured against their production costs and consumption needs. Some packed up and drove their animals towards pastures better connected with urban markets; others left animal husbandry altogether and headed for urban areas, primarily the greater Ulaanbaatar area, in search of another livelihood.

After several consecutive years of winter *zud* conditions from 1999 to 2002, however, thousands of pastoral households either lost their entire herds of animals or experienced herds shrinking below a critical level without having regular access to restocking. As a consequence, the steady flow of migration due to structural problems most recently has been dramatically increased due to mass loss of animals. Worse still, in large parts of the country common households are now induced by economic pressure to include migration to the city in their repertoire of strategies. As a result of massive migration the greater Ulaanbaatar area is now believed to accommodate as much as half the country's population, a large proportion of which lives under deplorable conditions in new semi-sedentarized ger-districts without proper access to sanitation, infrastructure or schooling.[2]

Yet herders move to the city for very different reasons: in addition to poverty and loss of animals they include education, economic incentives and social and cultural priorities. Rural communities increasingly suffer from the loss of their most resourceful members, primarily wealthy herders converting their livestock into a new life in the city and the young who seek an education in the city without intention of returning. In either case, wealth generated in rural areas ends up as investments in the city to prepare for coming generations. Whatever the cause, all types of migration to the city tend to indicate that the country's wealth, power and hope is now concentrated there.[3]

Based on anthropological fieldwork in rural Arkhangai, central Mongolia, this chapter explores the many ways in which the city exerts its attraction on a community of nomadic pastoralists, and to what extent a city existence is included in the strategies of the present herders, either for individual household members or for all. Much too often, Mongolian local history tends to be unknown or forgotten in the context of post-socialist development. Local memories of a recent past, when a much higher level of urbanism was found in particularly the township centres, but with great impact on the rural communities as such, form the background of present strategies. Collective memories include rural institutions that were fully integrated into the national economy, society and culture. Today, vital institutions are either missing, such as those assisting the herders in marketing their produce, providing extension service, seeing them through tough winters, and securing access to restocking, or are out of tune with present realities, such as the school, the police and several functions of township government administration, for instance those relating to pasture management and maintenance of wells.

By the overt prioritization of the modern sector and the implicit neglect of agriculture in the context of development, it seems, pastoral groups are pressurized into urban migration and sedentarization without having a place in national strategies. Why and when people choose to move to the city, however, and what the implications of the urban attraction are for pastoral people as well as for the survival of their communities, must be seen in a greater context including the general social and cultural circumstances of their lives. Obviously, due to the constant flow of people, goods, money and information between country and city, people weigh opportunities in the city against their own past and present experiences of the local area when deciding how to deal with crises. While some are determined to leave for good others may see urban migration as merely a temporary strategy to cope with agricultural crisis.

Thus we must consider the range of opportunities that herders have and the values they place in the local community as compared with the prospect for their lives in the city. When viewing the overall problems of migration and sedentarization in a nationwide and historical context, great fluctuations become evident, even a periodic crossflow of population segments between rural and urban areas. Yet the present challenges to rural communities, including both economic, institutional and cultural deprivation, appear to surpass those of the past.

The Pastoral Community Under Study

Khotont *sum*, located in southeastern Arkhangai some 400 km west of Ulaanbaatar, covers 3,387 sq. km. and has a population of roughly 5000 people, distributed between 1100 households. A typical central Mongolian pastoral area, up until the mid-twentieth century the entire population was connected to livestock herding, the local monastery, or both. The herders might engage in sideline activities such as caravanning, handicraft or soldiering, but were primarily specialized livestock herders, depending on regular exchanges with sedentary economies, either north or south. After the monastery was demolished in 1940 and some initial collectivization attempts had failed, compulsory membership of a herding collective was introduced in 1959–1960 (see Rossabi, this volume), assisted by police forces.

From the outset the *negdel* organization was faced with a dilemma. It forced everyone into collective ownership, but at the same time it needed some real encouragement for herders to cooperate in order to ensure the survival of the collective animals, especially under severe winter conditions. It could never be done by propaganda and control alone. Instead, a meticulous system of cash payment for specified herding tasks and quota deliveries was quickly established. A massive input of capital and trained personnel was needed to ensure high outputs, efficient management, and reliable controls. The Communist state responded by allocating enormous resources to the countryside, not least having taken heed of the mass revolt in 1932 and countless other local incidents.

Stocks of large animals were low after *negdel* membership was made compulsory, and it took most of a decade to build up the *negdel* herds to a size that allowed for better productivity. Herders were permitted to keep 10 animals per person, with a maximum of 50 animals per household, for their private use, and they received a cash income from herding the collective animals and jointly marketing the produce. But for many years this income remained low. In 1962 the *sum* total stock was just over 100,000 animals distributed among 700 herding families, which translates to an average of approximately 150 animals per family, comprising roughly 100 collective and 50 private animals. After little improvement in the countryside had been achieved in the 1960s, a formidable modernization effort was launched, intended to remould every single institution in the local society as well as the minds of the herders.

In the early 1970s the herders' income rose considerably due to increasing specialization and better management. While the animals in the earlier period had been herded much as in private production, they were now increasingly differentiated into species and frequently also into age groups. Herders were organized into small specialized production teams (*suur),* with responsibility for herding only one category of collective animals. Kinship ties were deliberately abolished as a basis for cohabitation in the camp, and newlyweds were only granted permission for cohabitation with relatives if justified by production needs. During the next several decades of collective production, the monthly payment for herding collective animals remained at a stable level. In addition, herders were paid for their set quota deliveries of milk, meat, hides, wool, cashmere, or live animals.

The herders were divided into a total of 180 *suur*s, of which 150 were herding *suur*s and the rest were milk farm *suur*s. Each *suur,* consisting of a few families (up to eight, with an average of four; the number depended on the type of animal), usually herded one particular type of collective animal according to a yearly contract (yet the maximum of 50 private animals per family still comprised several, if not all, categories of animals). Towards the end of the *negdel* period, a *suur* typically herded 600–800 sheep or goats, 200–300 horses, or 100–200 cows. Strict accounts were kept of the animals in the care of each *suur,* and each family was, in principle, held responsible for any loss of animals, both mature and newborn.

Towards the end of the socialist era, 100 *suur*s possessed small Japanese power generators, practically every family had a Russian transistor radio, and some possessed refrigerators or televisions. A variety of reading material was circulated among all herders. All five brigades (*bag*) had their own leader, a veterinary technician, a health worker, and a propagandist. Each *bag* had a truck at its disposal and the *bag* centre buildings were equipped with meeting rooms, storage facilities, and telephone connection to the *sum* centre. Herding life in the *suur* was generally reported to be good, with unprecedented security for people and animals. In particular, the later period until reforms started in 1987 was the golden era of the *negdel* with widespread support for the leadership.

Meanwhile state construction rose dramatically, thoroughly modernizing the countryside in the spirit of socialism. Apart from regular *sum* administration, public health, education, veterinary service, and a marketing centre remained state responsibility. A large number of new buildings turned the *sum* centre into a miniature metropolis of increasing complexity. A new school was built in 1950, and the present much-larger school with boarding facilities was built in the 1970s. From the late 1960s through the 1970s, a marketing centre, a veterinary centre with an animal hospital, a cultural palace, a Naadam stadium, a public library, a central heating station, a power station, pumps and well houses, two public baths, and a kindergarten were built. New services by hairdresser, dentist, and optician were introduced (the latter two were mobile services). During the late 1980s the construction of a large regional hospital began in the *sum* centre, but without completion. The *negdel* boasted similar building activity. In addition to its own administration buildings constructed in the 1970s and 1980s, it built a number of processing, manufacturing, service, storage, and trading facilities, including a dairy plant, a mill and fodder plant, a sausage factory, a felt works, a sewing shop, a building block factory, a vehicle garage and workshop, a greenhouse, seven underground storage facilities for vegetables and other foodstuffs, two bakeries, and several shops. Ten high-output dairy farms, each with 500 Simmental or other milk cows, were established in favourable locations on the steppe, and a pig farm and a chicken farm were set up in the *sum* centre.

Crop agriculture had begun on the northern plain already in 1940 in the form of a state farm, and it continued as an economic activity separate from collective herding. Despite yields of little more than one ton per hectare, extensive Soviet-style cropping on the northern plain spread to a number of other locations in northern Khotont, making use of Soviet-built caterpillar tractors and heavy combines. At its height in the 1980s, 3,500 hectares were under plough, producing close to 4,000 tons of grain per year and providing jobs for almost 100 people. A huge state machine station in the *sum* centre, containing 30 combines and nearly 100 trucks and tractors as well as large amounts of other agricultural machinery and equipment, provided garage and maintenance facilities for *negdel* vehicles.

Towards the end of the socialist era, approximately 600 people had regular salaried work in the *sum* centre. A hundred workplaces were in government, 400 in the *negdel,* and 100 in the state farms. Two *ger* districts quite similar to those fringing Mongolian cities arose spontaneously when herding families settled in the *sum* centre to work as drivers, workers, administrators, technicians, teachers, cleaners, and so forth. This was the peak of the socialist era and the most complex community ever built on the steppe. Resentment of collectivization had mostly died away, and were it not for the political repression and senseless persecution of the previous decades, socialism could be judged a success. Both herders and *negdel* workers were kept busy and remained under a number of direct and subtle controls, but life was generally described as rich and secure. Health and educational standards were vastly improved, veterinary service had enhanced both animal and human health, and economic security was guaranteed through stable salaries, motorized assistance when moving the camp, emergency fodder supplies for the animals in hard winters, and collective restocking, if necessary. General literacy, attained during the 1970s, and cultural activities were strategic means of eradicating the 'feudal' aspects of Mongolian society. The cultural centre (see Marsh, this volume) offered theatre, music and dance performances by travelling troops, public balls, dance lessons, and political meetings. A travelling cinema operated both in the centre and in the rural *bag* centres. A new Naadam arena outside the *sum* centre attracted everyone during the yearly summer festival. As late as 1930 illiteracy had been common and hardly any texts besides Tibetan religious scripts had been available, but now people were being introduced to an entirely new universe of information about the outside world. An impressive number of newspapers, colourful magazines, and books were available in the public library and reading rooms.

Direct Soviet involvement in Mongolian rural development became still more apparent after 1960, when the *negdel* was constructed as a comprehensive unit that met all of the herding household's social and economic needs. With socialist rural policy and planning following the Soviet model, the Mongolian ministries were gradually integrated into their Soviet mother ministries. Crop farming was developed with a massive input of primarily Russian technology, and the *negdel*s were also infused with Russian and East European technology. With the foreign technology came increasing specialization of labour and a steady flow into Mongolia of foreign, mainly Russian, craftsmen, technicians, agricultural economists, doctors, veterinarians, breeding experts, teachers, and advisors. They never held more than short-term assignments, though, as the *negdel* itself was responsible for contracts and salaries. Their greatest impact lay in fitting together all the elements in the construction of a *sum* centre mini-metropolis and thus in creating a European model on Mongolian soil. Their relations with the local people were generally good and they were much respected for quickly picking up the Mongolian language. Many elderly men now jokingly muse that 'they first of all taught us to drink vodka', recalling the vast consumption of alcohol when socializing.

Scientific pasture management was introduced, but real improvement could only be achieved with a massive input of capital and technology. In particular, the use of the higher pastures without access to surface water was facilitated by the construction of a *sum*-wide system of wells, some bored as deep as 90 metres into the ground and driven by electric motors or diesel engines. Pasture management became the exclusive responsibility of the *negdel* leadership, which appointed the appropriate pasture for each *suur* and planned its pattern of seasonal movement.

'Transition': Rustication of the Pastoral Society

The above illustrates the complexity of a rural community before the transition, both in terms of economic activities and employment differentiation as well as in the consumer goods and social services for its members. Cultural life matched, with substantial resources allocated to schooling, a variety of reading material made available to everyone, movies and performances run in the cultural centre and evening classes with a variety of themes.

An increasing level of 'urbanism' was achieved, here understood as rural-urban integration (Humphrey 1999: 180). Using a series of indicators such as schooling, professional specialization, goods and services available, information exchange and infrastructure works, urbanism and urban culture were certainly taking a hold in the *sum* centre, through which it was extended to herders. People from pastoral areas did move to the city for education and jobs in the modern sector, but an equally significant tendency of particularly the 1960s to 1980s was that urban culture, in the form of socialist modernization, was consciously brought to the country to radically transform life.

Privatization of the *negdel* meant instant unemployment for a large segment of the population. Of the 600 non-herding jobs in the *sum* (consisting of 1100 households) little more than a hundred remained. All production facilities were dismantled and the equipment invariably left the area, mostly bought by new city-based entrepreneurs. All harvest combines left the area as did the majority of trucks and tractors. The privatization process was a disaster for the local area due to inadequate legal foundation, lack of control, and political struggle between the *negdel* organization and the new government (Bruun 2005: ch. 1).

Practically all pastoral support institutions collapsed with the *negdel*: the marketing centre closed, pasture allocation was replaced by open access, transportation for moving camp was privatized, all fencing was abandoned, the ensilage production terminated and the state emergency fodder supply was discontinued. Only the veterinary service survived in the form of two former *negdel* veterinarians establishing their own private stations.

While the majority of livestock (not all were accounted for) were allocated to the herders,[4] all other assets either left the area or were concentrated in the hands of a few, primarily the former *negdel* leadership. Local economic and professional diversification, consciously promoted to generate local economic growth, instantly collapsed: grain, flour, ensilage, dairy, sausage, building block, felt, clothes, vegetable, pork and poultry productions all ceased. Paradoxically, in a situation when infrastructure was breaking down and transportation became scarce, the *sum* became entirely dependent on the capital centre, through which every item now had to be bought.

Privatization left the *sum* centre appearing as if ravaged by war. Former *negdel* buildings were dismantled, the building materials either sold or used for firewood or private construction, leaving the bare concrete foundations. Other buildings were abandoned, such as the school dormitory, a government guest house, garages and machine stations.

In the country, all fencing of winter pastures disappeared, as did some *bag* centre construction. Vital telephone lines connecting *sum* and *bag* centres were dismantled and the wire sold by a private company manager taking over from the *negdel*. The well system ensuring a better distribution of grazing pressure was abandoned and electric motors and diesel engines vanished.

Under these altered circumstances the herder population could only revert to the simplest of pastoral practices, neither traditional (since there were always political superstructures setting the terms for ownership patterns and pasture management) nor modern (since all scientific pasture management and breeding practices collapsed with the *negdel*), but rather in a state of anarchy.

The old *negdel* herder households became private herders, attempting to build up their herds to a size and variety that would ensure their livelihood. During the *negdel* period the herders had been lead into specialization (the *suur* herding only one type of animal). Now they were forced into a higher degree of subsistence production: the collective marketing centre and infrastructure vanished and the vital economic exchange with urban areas was gradually taken over by private traders, ruthlessly exploiting their position as truck owners in a situation of scarce transportation. Thus, the value of the herders' production dropped while prices of consumer goods soared, distance at the same time becoming a crucial parameter; herders in the southern part of the *sum* would experience their sheep having only half the value of sheep in the *sum* centre when measured against grain products. Herders that were accustomed to a wide range of consumer goods and common securities now increasingly had to rely on their own production of food and fibre. Similarly, information that previously was consciously disseminated in printed and broadcasted form now depended entirely on word of mouth.

The social fabric began to change. Government employees mostly continued in their jobs, while the highly diversified group of professional staff and workers in the *negdel* were left with few other choices than private livestock herding or migration. Thus, the life-long herders were now joined by *negdel* workers so that the number of households primarily depending on livestock herding rose from 600 to almost 900. However, out of the group of *negdel* staff and workers also several new groups emerged: private entrepreneurs, running mostly small businesses in the *sum* centre, and a new class of *sum* centre poor living on odd jobs, alms, prostitution and theft. Regular private employment today accounts for little more than a hundred jobs, however, distributed among some small companies run by former *negdel* officials, several shops, private veterinarians, some transport businesses, two gas stations, a lama running a temple, a small private kindergarten, and a bar.

The *sum* centre today has a population of approximately 400 households, but with no real distinction between herder and town population since the majority of the latter possess some animals and many households have combined economic activities. In summer, around a hundred *sum* centre households set up their *ger*s on surrounding pastures to graze their animals. Social and economic differentiation has developed in the *sum* centre to an even higher extent than on the steppe. Half of those people characterized by local government as desperately poor (approximately 80 households) live in *sum* centre, most being without regular income. Obviously the centre is also the home of the new political and economic elite, including former *negdel* officials, present government leadership, veterinarians, shopkeepers, gas station owners, the lama and a few others.

It is a crucial aspect of contemporary herder communities that most of their present members grew up under the *negdel*, with regular employment, monthly salaries and contract livestock production. This is ingrained in their memories and tends to form part of their personal identities, to the effect that many see themselves as 'unemployed' former *negdel* members, now practicing animal husbandry in want of other opportunities. This does not, however, comprise a constant and penetrating sense of a misplaced existence, but along with the fact that most of the young want to leave for the capital, as well as the general feeling among rural people of being neglected in national development strategies, it is indeed gnawing at the roots of the pastoral identity.

Country and City Drifting Apart

For the Soviet Union and the communist government in Mongolia regional social and economic development obviously were vital matters. Extensive development and educational efforts in the countryside, it was hoped, would ensure the cooperation of the herding population and their gradual integration into modern society. Mongolia's historical role as a buffer region between Russian and Chinese interests further counted for a policy of building regional city and local township centres connected by vital infrastructure. These massive investment efforts were successful in the sense that Mongolia became a show-piece for Comecon socio-economic development during the 1970s and 1980s.

Official history is supported by personal memories of a time when a greater sense of meaning and purpose existed among the herders. In the highly disciplined, but economically rewarding era of the *negdel*, there were hopes of Mongolian independence and nativization of culture, believed to allow a greater personal freedom without sacrificing the newly-won prosperity.

A sweeping economic collapse followed the break-up of the Soviet Union and subsequent Mongolian independence. Not least the lack of market infrastructure has hindered successful privatization in the country; instead of broad rural development, only those few areas with easy access to urban markets were favoured with new wealth. At the same time Mongolian politics went through the dramatic oscillations of the popular vote typical of a new democracy and did not provide a stable platform for government action. Even if such a platform had existed, government action and legitimation increasingly concentrated on urban areas. The democratic coalition government from 1996–2000 had a particularly uncaring approach to agriculture. In 2000 the MPRP returned to power with a policy of regional development, albeit as a fourth priority, but found itself unable to make a difference in rural areas. In 2004 a new coalition government has been formed after an election stalemate between MPRP and the Motherland-Democracy Coalition. Ironically, however, considering everyone's proximity to the nomadic lifestyle, is a lacking sense of understanding of the basic premises for pastoral production. Rather than seeing herders as specialized livestock producers, historically linked to sedentary economies and dependent on exchanges with the national society, post-independence Mongolian governments have tended to ethnify the herder population as cultural relic of the past.

The poverty resulting from economic collapse became a matter of concern for international aid organizations, working on mainly Western and Japanese funding. Problems of development being most visible to foreign aid workers in the capital area and aid organizations depending on cooperation with Mongolian central government presumably contributed to an overwhelming concentration of aid projects, staff and funding there. One estimate has that merely 5 per cent of all foreign aid was allocated to rural development during the 1990s (Griffin 2001: 99). In comparison, agriculture, meaning primarily animal husbandry, has contributed 25–35 per cent of GDP since independence.

The total impact of this economic maladjustment is obvious to any Mongolian. While the capital has become a bustling metropolis with a wealth of new businesses, shopping, hotels and entertainment, all supported by renovated infrastructure, transportation and information facilities, the collapse in township centres has been mostly unabated. For instance, although there is regular power supply in the Khotont *sum* centre, today few can watch television. Radio broadcasting for herders has nearly ceased and few reading materials are available; newspapers are a week old when they reach the *sum*; reading, which previously was common among herders, has become a rare activity. There is no regular public transportation, health services are scarce and tend to be expensive, the local school suffers from tattered teaching materials, lack of staff and inadequate boarding facilities. While the yearly value of foreign aid to Mongolia is approximately 100 dollars per capita, the value of those sporadic development efforts or pieces of foreign equipment found in Khotont may be counted in single digits.

Today there is little cash money in the countryside. In striking accordance with the above, a World Bank report estimated 95 per cent of all cash money to be found in the capital (World Bank 2002: 11). In rural areas most transactions are performed as barter, sustained by the widespread practice among private traders to refuse paying for the herders' produce in cash, but instead exchanging live animals and cashmere for flour, rice, garments, boots, tea and so forth (Bruun 2005: ch. 6).

While the need for centralized heating in the Soviet-built apartment block in Ulaanbaatar was obvious to anyone considering the cold winters and the building of new power plants and repair of pipelines quickly became a matter for foreign donors, the herders' occasional need for winter provisions for their animals and access to restocking was ignored. While the need for public transportation in the Ulaanbaatar area was a matter of concern and efficiently solved by donor support, the herders' need for efficient marketing, marketing information and transportation remained private issues. While the provision of information in the form of newspapers, TV broadcasting and Internet connection were government and donor priorities in the capital, rural areas were effectively cut off: even radio programmes to herders are now scarce and difficult to receive due to the closure of relay stations. While the new urban banking sector has had top priority among government and donors, even simple rural institutions for restocking are not available. While public authorities have supported the establishment of new market places to increase the volume and variety of consumer goods in urban areas, herders still tend to be in the pocket of a few private entrepreneurs. One could go on endlessly.

Failed Institutions

The socialist institutions that collapsed with the *negdel* were, in principle, expected either to be replaced by the market and local self-organizing or be rendered obsolete. Again, however, the new Mongolian government was surprisingly unaware of the basic mechanism in pastoral production and behaviour in nomadic groups, for instance the tendency towards tribal or other segmentary organization (Salzman 2004: 142) and their inherent resistance to the state (Salzman 2004: 29). The herding sector has dwelt in an institutional vacuum: state administrative organization ties the herders to a political hierarchy without truly defending their interests.

Two institutions that previously were of central concern to the *negdel* and subjected to scientific methods, joint pasture management and controlled breeding, were discontinued. Although now a responsibility of local government, pasture management was left to the herders in the form of an open access situation, where even basic restrictions such as for protection of winter grazing could not be sanctioned. The complex system of wells was abandoned, partly because it was placed under the jurisdiction of the *aimag* government, which expected 'something in return' for handing it over to *sum* authorities. When central government interfered and transferred responsibility to the *sum* ten years later, there was little left to protect. Since also the maintenance of tracks and bridges was discontinued and the areas furthest away from the *sum* centre quickly came to suffer from much poorer terms of trade, grazing pressure grew considerably on certain tracts of land and left others under-utilized.

Most seriously, no agricultural extension service was formed on the basis of existing knowledge and infrastructure. The constant measurements of rainfall, grass growth and grass nutritional quality, experimentation with grass species and local fodder resources were discontinued. Previous breeding programmes, known for several distinct types of cattle and a modified breed of Mongolian sheep which had gained wide recognition, were abandoned, to the effect that today cattle tends to be cattle and sheep to be sheep. Only conventional means of exchanging male animals at certain intervals remain. The most serious blow to animal husbandry was the transfer of responsibility for all pasture areas from the old Ministry of Food and Agriculture to a new Ministry of Nature and Environment in the early 1990s (see Mearns 2004), a tactical move to further undermine the Communist party with great influence on this ministry as well as to satisfy foreign donors and attract aid. However, with neither competence at local level nor interest in picking up from its predecessor, the Ministry of Environment plays a diminutive role in the *sum*. All that is left of the huge agro and zoo-technical apparatus of the *negdel* and the *aimag* and *sum* sections of the Ministry of Agriculture, is a single employee of the Ministry of Environment stationed at *sum* level. This elderly man is rarely seen in the office, where his main function is to produce biannual reports to the ministry, and being without transport he has little capacity to inspect animals and pasture.

Mobility was dramatically reduced after the *negdel*. Local government possesses merely a single jeep to be shared among all its departments, a jeep that the governor usually occupies for his meetings. Ironically, as a legacy from the socialist era horses are considered inappropriate for government work, despite being indispensable in private life.

The institutional void after socialism is equally significant in the social sector. Schooling is inevitably a critical issue among nomadic groups (Salzman 2004: 16). The school, placed in the *sum* centre, plays a vital role in preparing the young for life and for higher education. The school's curriculum is a modern one set by nationwide standards, with merely minor adjustments since Mongolian independence. Yet, although the teachers struggle to maintain standards with fewer means than before, the context has changed. Previously nine years of compulsory education saw the young into free higher education, either in the *aimag* centre, in the capital or in Moscow, and a wide range of non-herding job opportunities lay open, both at home in the *sum* centre and elsewhere. Today, only a privileged few can go on to university and job opportunities within the *sum* are virtually absent. Thus, for common herders there is great ambivalence towards continued schooling beyond a very basic level. Vocational training is absent; neither herding, nor technical or business skills are taught locally (Morris and Bruun 2004: ch. 6). What further complicates the herder children's participation is that the school stubbornly upholds modern, essentially urban, values at a time when urbanism is generally in decline in rural areas. Herder children are forced to wear modern clothes (the traditional *deel* is unwanted in the school), taught to speak modern Mongolian and avoid the rural parlance, address and courtesy, and tend to be despised by the *sum*-centre establishment. Similarly, the boarding facilities that previously ensured equitable schooling for all have been dramatically reduced and tend to be costly despite legislation against payment. The school possesses one of the few TV sets in the *sum* centre, around which children gather to watch programmes from the capital, invariably tuned towards modernity, foreign lifestyles and consumerism. Herder children end up with a leg in either world, but without a safe place of their own. They bring news from this modern world to their families at home, who often see them as twisted by modern education, but still represent a coarse and outmoded way of life when in the school.

Another local body out of tune with present society is the police. The little police station, basically a sparsely equipped room in the government building, has three staff and one motorcycle. The station has no guns, no handcuffs and no detention facilities. As with other leading officials, the chief of police is often away, using the station's only transport and leaving the two remaining officers immobile. Among the stout, mounted herders two policemen walking about in the *sum* centre on foot is a pitiful sight, hardly inducing respect for authority.

Generally the station depends on herders coming to the little police station for reporting rather than police patrolling or investigating in the rural areas. If herders were all law-abiding or had customary institutions for regulation, control and sanctioning, this would perhaps be sufficient. However, in a situation where pasture regulation has collapsed, an increasing number of migrant herder families from more distant *aimag*s comes in to search for grazing and thus contributes to increased grazing pressure around rivers and tracks, and drinking and alcohol-related violence has gone out of control, the meagre policing capability is disastrous. For instance, rustling is rampant and a constant threat to everyone, both in the form of regular theft and as private retaliation for pasture trespassing. Especially for poorer households, a single theft may reduce their herd beyond a critical level and eventually deprive them of their livelihood. Generally, all property, whether mobile or immobile, must be constantly guarded against theft, putting pressure on anyone owning a motor vehicle or having invested in business or housing. Assaults and threats of violence present a constant limitation to government work, political activity, and common association.

The Migration Drain

The socialist state deliberately broke up conventional social organization and individualized employment, to the effect that men, women and the young in principle had equal rights and responsibilities.[5] At the break-up of socialism and return to private ownership the household quickly regained its importance as an economic unit and the primary organization for work, leisure and security. To cope with crises in agriculture and society at large many households have diversified their strategies, both to obtain alternative income and to make use of surplus labour. A household may have combined strategies bridging agriculture and wage labour and thus have dual livelihood locations, for instance when one or several household members have gone to work in the *sum* centre, in another town or in the capital, and the remaining household members look after the animals. Even within Khotont *sum* several households have dual homes, one being a *ger* in the *sum* centre where one member has work (all regular employment has become precious), while the remaining part of the household are nomadic pastoralists in a rural *bag*.

It is essential to understanding the priorities of the nomadic household, however, to be aware that purely economic models may only have limited use. Pastoralists, like peasants, are commonly living and working within the household economic unit, which frames their socio-economic and other priorities (Creed 2000). Most forcefully, A.V. Chayanov (1966), in a fierce debate with proponents of a Marxist perspective argued that the Russian peasants of the early twentieth century were neither capitalist, nor socialist, but worked according their own internal dynamics deriving from common lifecycle events of births, weddings, deaths and so forth. Thus, what mattered most for the common peasant household was the balance between work and consumption needs, to the effect that the work input would be regulated according to circumstances. That the household economic unit shows a great robustness, even when under considerable stress, and in many cases can operate in circumstances where capitalist enterprises go broke, finds evidence even among Western farmers (Long 1984).

Despite seeming very much alike, Mongolian herder household may reveal great internal variation in their economic strategies. In fact, two main forms of herding tend to coexist (Sneath 1999: 225; Bruun 2005: ch. 6), making use of the same basic technology. The simple form, practised by the common pastoral herder households, bears great resemblance to the peasant form outlined by Chayanov, focussing on consumption needs and taking into account the immediate balance between working and dependent household members. It offers a great measure of leisure, especially for the male head of household during summer. Still this form is not essentially subsistence based: although making use of simple production and often barter, it is specialized agriculture in continued exchange with and thus dependent on national markets and international economic fluctuations.

The other form has equal backing in conventional values, for instance in 'putting the needs of the animals first', but at the same time is intensely focussed on accumulation. The 'pastoral entrepreneurs' using this model manage both their herds and their households with equal determination, thus founding their production on the participation and efficient cooperation of all household members. On the other hand, due to the self-generating capacity of their capital, livestock, in favourable weather and pasture conditions their efforts may bear fruit within a relative short span of time. Wealth in the form of large herds, typically in the range of a thousand animals, may be divided to favour the young generation at marriage or may be converted to other forms of wealth.

Numerous studies of nomadic groups have emphasized how there are two separate processes by which herders leave their native lands and settle down (Barth 1964, Salzman 1980, Sneath 1999), relating to the two main forms of herding outlined above: one is chosen, another is forced. The first form converts the self-generating, but also highly vulnerable, animal capital into more secure forms of capital such as jewellery, trucks, land, or, in modern Mongolia, urban housing in order for the household to move into the city. The other form, undeniably being the most common, consists of households being squeezed out of herding by unsustainable herds or mass loss of animals due to disasters, pests, theft and the like. Obviously herders may leave only temporarily to ride off a crisis, but re-entry into herding is seriously restrained by inadequate rural finance. There is a sharp distinction between temporary movement to adjacent *sum*s or *aimag*s with better grazing, which is a conventional strategy (*otor*), and actual migration to a new location. Patterns of migration are increasingly complex, however, both in terms of the actual purposes of migration – economic, social and educational – and in terms of the livelihood strategies that people may make use of. Both challenges and opportunities in this highly turbulent phase of Mongolian independence have driven individuals and households away from settled patterns. The household itself has come under pressure, often to the extent that its members become divided between rural and urban areas.

In Khotont, as in most rural communities, most of the wealth generated locally ends up as investments in housing, business or education in the capital, thus only sporadically contributing to local economic development and job creation. Under the influence of modern schooling and the media both the most gifted and the most determined among the young now invariably seek a life in the city, if not abroad. Previously, herders resisted the urban aspirations of their children, but attitudes have changed along with the continued denigration of rural life since independence. Paying for a daughter's or a son's higher education is now a common form of investment whereby both money and brains simultaneously leave the area. Frequently, this investment is thought of in terms of creating a platform for the entire family group in the capital.

A great many young people go to the *aimag* centre or to the capital to work or study, typically before they start their own family. It is the inevitable lot of rural communities, however, that those who come back tend to be the least successful. In Khotont, some examples were: a young businessman who was cheated of all his capital in the China trade and thus had to return to his parents' *ger*; several disillusioned workers who had lived in dormitories in the city for years without ever earning enough money to move on; a university student who became pregnant and returned to her native *bag*, not with an exam, but with a small child which she could not care for alone; a jobless youth giving up on the tough life in the city and returning to Khotont to start a bar in his father's premises, a divorced mother and her two children escaping from the alcoholism and brutality of the father, several children sent to the country in the care of relatives because their parents were both unemployed and lived a miserable life in the city, and a host of young people who went to work outside the *sum* without ever getting other than temporary employment for low pay.

Population Movement and Sedentarization

Evidence from around the world shows that sedentarization of pastoral people may not be permanent, but instead be part of a temporary strategy to cope with crises in the pastoral economy. Mongolian post-socialist experience only confirms that the herding population may rise and fall both with national economic ups and downs, primarily in the sense that herding has acted as an employment buffer for people with roots in herding but having taken up non-herding occupations, and with internal crises in herding due to, for instance, mass loss of animals. As noted above there may be dual processes of sedentarization at work simultaneously, drawing people from both the upper and lower echelons of pastoral communities, while the 'moderately successful' herders may show the greatest stability. A logical consequence, which may also be backed by some historical evidence, is that increasing economic differentiation will also give rise to a greater flow of people, and presumably of capital, to urban areas: pauperized vagrants and wealthy livestock owners, lamas and new entrepreneurs.

Over the last century, it seems, the herder population has remained fairly stable, although data are incomplete. In Khotont, as a case in point, the herder population of approximately 700 households in year 2000 did not radically depart from a long-term average in the range of 500 herder households (based on total aimag figures and local memories). After the *zud*, an estimated 600 households remain, coming even closer to pre-socialist figures. The livestock population, too, has been stable despite great short-term fluctuations. Again, after the *zud* national statistics have a national total of 23.9 million animals (NSOM 2003), similar to the official figures for 1930, 1960–1973, 1980 and 1988 (SSOM 1996: 27). In Khotont, the corresponding figure would be roughly 90,000 animals.

Evidently, throughout the socialist era pastoral areas have produced a constant population surplus that has migrated to the city, mostly to become sedentarized, or semi-sedentarized in the sense that they have retained potential mobility by living in a *ger* but have chosen to stay in one location.

The present situation, however, has more parallels to the situation prior to 1930, when authoritarian government and socialist planning began to consolidate in rural areas. Accounts from the period 1850–1930 are ripe with descriptions of herdless and jobless Mongol vagrants subsisting in the outskirts of cities, towns and monasteries (see chapter 1, this volume). Sharp professional-cum-ethnic fault lines separating Mongols from Chinese, Kazakhs and Europeans placed most non-herding activities in the hands of non-Mongols. Compared with other nomadic groups, who commonly combine animal husbandry with crop production, gardening, trade, handicraft, wage labour or other economic alternatives, the Outer Mongolian herders historically have had a high degree of specialization and a relatively low degree of sideline economic activities. These overall conditions have greatly contributed to shaping their identities as nomadic livestock herders, used to the self-generating wealth of their animals, boundless pasture and protein-hungry markets both north and south, while being conscious of the bargaining power derived from both their animal capital, raiding power and strong bodily stature.

Sedentarization in Mongolia therefore followed a somewhat different pattern than encountered elsewhere, where population groups that have made use of nomadic strategies decreased their mobility or settled down entirely. While many nomadic groups have become sedentary within a rural context as farmers, artisans, traders etc., or may have drifted towards city areas in search of casual work, Mongolians were sedentarized within a context of general schooling, common higher education and, not least, urbanization and great professional specialization. Farming, historically associated with the way of life of the ethnic Chinese, remained despised and subjected to sweeping mechanization in state farms: a Mongol would ride a tractor but never till the land with his own hands. In very general terms and over-generalizing for the sake of the argument, the Mongolian herders were allowed by their modern history to maintain their ethnic pride and priorities – which in the present situation may impede their options.

Nomads in the City

Categorically speaking, there are two ways out of herding: the voluntary and the forced. Following a number of households and individuals from Khotont who went to the city to work temporarily, study or settle permanently, tended to validate the categories above. There were distinct successes and failures, much depending on the prior wealth of the household and their educational level.

In the early years of reform a number of *negdel* staff such as agro-economists, veterinarians and engineers went to the city, accompanied by other professional such as teachers and doctors. Particularly the former group possessed high levels of expertise and many in addition left with a large share of the *negdel* capital. Most of these people were valued in the market economy and fared well, becoming part of the new middle class or even elite. Many other non-herder staff left the *negdel*, including drivers, mechanics, clerks and worker, much depending on actual jobs available and family matters.

The exodus of the educated with their skills, capital and urban values also devalued the *sum* centre as a place for wealthy herders to settle down: it became increasingly associated with a rural area as opposed to a real town. Among the herders, moving to the city involved both those with ample resources and the impoverished; in response to rising social differentiation herders from the extreme ends of the scale, driven by either economic necessity or social ambitions, are more inclined to move than those of the middle socioeconomic range. The segmentation of the upper sections of nomadic groups, and the transfer of these households and their wealth to a settled environment, is a common and well-described process indicative of the surplus that may be generated in pastoral animal husbandry (Barth 1964).

The group of herders in Khotont owning more than 400 animals hardly consists of more than 50 households, however, for which reason the number of wealthy herders settling down is relatively small, just a few households each year. Presumably with a heavy impact on potential settlers at present is the mass unemployment in the city as well as stories of ill luck among the new urban settlers that circulate in the *sum*. Several local herder families have transferred successfully to an urban lifestyle, primarily those with good connections and kinship networks, but many others have been ghastly failures (Bruun 2005: ch.7). Much more common seems to be a gradual transfer of resources to the city, often in connection with the education of the young: Families invest in the young's future by paying for their studies, hoping it will pay off at a later stage, and if they can afford they will buy a flat in the city, first for their children and later for themselves to move into. Other common forms of investments are in vehicles and business, allowing people more mobility and only gradually moving from a herder to a town of city area.

The group of herders squeezed out of herding due to 'defeat, decline, drought and denigration' is of course much larger and more diverse. It comprises herders having lost many or all animals due to lack of commitment, energy or skills or just suffering from bad luck; families with inadequate labour due to a bad labour/dependency ratio, disease or alcoholism; incomplete families having suffered death, hospitalisation, divorce, imprisonment, and so forth; young people trying herding before deciding on another lifestyle; and elderly people giving up on the tough life on the steppe and moving into the city to live with relatives.

Through the mid-to-late 1990s approximately 100 people left Khotont each year: the majority went to the capital. Since the *sum* is located in a 'watershed' between the central parts of the country experiencing in-migration and the outer regions subject to out-migration, the loss of population was to some extent compensated for by others moving in from mainly the western *aimag*s. This situation changed dramatically after the *zud*-period of the early 2000s, however, when real loss of population rose to several hundred individuals each year (although not fully reflected in statistics as people tend to maintain their rural registration).

The *zud* contributed to the further contraction of Mongolia's inhabitable space and added to the relative attraction of the capital, where means from various sources, including foreign aid and trade, are more plentiful. The recent migrants have also been the least successful. They mostly represent herder households driven out by real destitution, and the vast majority end up in the provisional *ger* districts around Ulaanbaatar. They derive their livelihood from various sources, including a few domestic animals, food aid, odd jobs, petty trade and assistance from relatives; many of them are desperately poor and without means.

The foregoing has shown those conditions that drive people away from their native *sum* as well as those that attract them to the city. These overall conditions are not neutral in terms of family coherence, however. In peasant societies labour migration may split elder and younger generations and even husband and wife; in the pastoral lifestyle a gendered labour distribution and the need for cooperation tend to put a stronger demand on at least the family's horizontal unity. This condition changes radically when herder families move to urban areas. A common experience is that family hierarchy, not a natural given but to a large extent a cultural pattern, is challenged in the city, even gradually breaking up. When men and women seek employment on an equal footing in the city, the women's higher capacity for routine labour, lower expectations of prestigious position and lesser consumption of alcohol may serve them well (see Benwell, this volume). Men inevitably lose position and authority; many men enter a downward spiral turning them into jobless alcoholics. Challenges to family organization, frustrations born out of unemployment and excessive alcohol consumption all contribute to a high intensity of families breaking up, both vertically and horizontally.

What was instilled in the children to ensure strengths in the country may easily become weaknesses in the city. The self-reliant ideals and toughening of children, taught to endure hardship and pain, as well as the arbitrary use of violence, may foster values and behaviour incompatible with an urban lifestyle. Furthermore, the lack of dietary variation and the children's tasks of carrying heavy loads both impede body growth to the effect that rural children are significantly smaller than urban children, some looking much younger than their age. Their dark complexion, rural dialects and traditional terms of expression tend to stigmatise them in an urban setting.

Conclusions

Obviously, in the case of rural-to-urban migration in Mongolia the rural repellent is as powerful as the urban attraction. This is not meant to say that if rural institutions were in place and government priorities were different rural people would remain rural. However, both from a social, economic and rights perspective the herder and rural town population are seriously underprivileged in the post-independence Mongolian society. Rural communities suffer under the contracted state, in which the few institutions remaining in rural areas have become minimalist tools of the state in securing territorial control rather than offering genuine services to the local community. Judging from government proclamations, Mongolia has still not effectively departed from the high-modernist, authoritarian statehood so typical of the socialist era (Scott 1998). Government envisions the settling of 90 percent of the population in modern cities in a string along the 'Millennium Road' across Mongolia. So far, any public construction out of the city of Ulaanbaatar has been subject to collapse.

Two separate, though interrelated, population movements have been set in motion since independence, one relating to structural problems in agriculture and the other relating to the *zud*. In both cases, however, there has been a tendency among Mongolian government and elite to blame geography and nature rather than to delve into the lack of infrastructure, pasture regulation, watering points, emergence fodder supplies, and general economic and social support that rural areas have suffered, even a lack of commitment. Pastoral communities continue to suffer from the evolutionary thinking and the lack of a sense of realism on the part of the crucial actors in the fourth moment, i.e. the new urban elite, market entrepreneurs and international aid organizations.

At the same time, government and donors show inadequate insight into the basic mechanism of pastoral production. In particular, they have not been able to depart from the common perception of conventional herding as a subsistence means, backward and unproductive, despite the substantial contribution of agriculture to BNP throughout the modern period. Instead, they have contributed to the indigenization of the herder population, turning it into a spectacle for the tourist industry and a colorful testimony to Mongolia's great heritage. As a consequence, the herding sector is left without national socio-economic priority and without the service facilities that agricultural producers around the world depend on to safeguard their farms and efficiently market their produce in competition with imported goods. With low socioeconomic priority comes the denigration of rural people. Apart from the seizure of their pasture, the greatest threat to nomadic peoples is the downgrading and ridicule of their lifestyle; after a life-time's study of nomadic groups Philip Salzman notes, 'In the modernist vision, spread effectively and widely through schools and the mass media, rural producers, such as pastoralists on the range with their animals, are deemed marginal and backward . . . and without recruitment, pastoralism dies.' (Salzman 2004: 16).

When nomads come to power, it has been argued (Barfield 2001: 235), the remaining pastoral population segment lose their bargaining power, without having received direct political power by means of independent institutions representing their interests. As a result they have been pinned down to a position usually associated with peasants, vulnerable to exploitation and without access to independent political action. In the extreme interpretation, continued cultural diversification between rural and urban Mongolia will lead to renewed tribalization of pastoralists, experiencing to be colonized by their own kind.

Urbanism, relating to urban values and defined as above, has decisively declined in rural areas as an outcome of a growing rural-urban divide. Whereas *sum* towns previously were urban-like centres with high levels of professional specialization, education, information and cultural life, they have become subject to economic collapse, social impoverishment and general rustification. Migration to urban areas has increased but at the same changed character: Mongolian migrants, rather than moving towards new opportunities such as is the case in industrializing economies, where the rural-urban distinction is rapidly blurring (Rigg 1998), increasingly move away from broken-up farms and into a rural-urban limbo.

Notes

1 Soviet aid may be cautiously estimated at 30 per cent of GNP when at its height in the 1980s. Some estimates are considerably higher: see Sneath, this volume, note 15.

2 According to the Mongolian Red Cross Society the population of Ulaanbaatar has increased by over 300,000 people, many of whom live in new ger districts without sanitation or are homeless. Tens of thousands of children live in the streets.

3 Despite massive development assistance, closely resembling the level during the Soviet era, Mongolia may be seen to have slid from a second- to a third-world type of economy after the transition (Bruun et.al. 2000).

4 Out of the 70,000 collective animals some 20,000 animals were not accounted for (Bruun 2005: ch. 1).

5 At the same time, however, the Mongolian state had a strong family policy encouraging large families and a range of privileges for women in relation to child care and early retirement.

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8

Namkhainyambuu and the Changes in the Herding Economy of Mongolia

Mary and Morris Rossabi

Tserendash Namkhainyambuu personifies the native acumen, historical wisdom, and integrity of spirit that have characterized Mongolia's pastoral nomadic heritage. Successful herdsman and popular philosopher and sage, he gained his country's admiration when he fulfilled his pledge to increase the number and quality of sheep to extraordinary levels – 'within twenty years, ten thousand white sheep'. At the age of twenty-nine, he became one of the youngest Labor Heroes in the history of socialist Mongolia. In his life and writings, he reflects the dramatic organizational changes in Mongolian herding over the past half century. In his early childhood, herders persisted in their centuries-long cycle of migration, seeking water and grass for their own animals. By the time he was ten years old, in 1958, the government of the Mongolian Peoples Republic, the second Communist state in world history, had either forced or cajoled herders to join *negdel*s or collectives, causing a transfer of a majority of their animals to joint ownership. Namkhainyambuu has spent most of his adult life as a member of a collective, tending the animals, studying their habits, and using the latest techniques to increase, as well as to improve, the quality of the herds. His growing expertise led to renown and rewards during the Communist era. He observed the decollectivization or abandonment of the *negdel*s, and the privatization of the herds in 1991–92. He has observed, with great concern, the ensuing difficulties in the pastoral economy, problems that plague his fellow herders and have led many to leave the countryside for the cities.

During his youth in the 1950s, the government sought greater control over herders, partly because pasture allocation was disorganized and partly because the paucity of wells, hay, and winter shelters (which, it believed, required State support for construction and maintenance) hampered gains in productivity. However, having learned its lesson from the hastiness of earlier collectivization efforts in the late 1920s and early 1930s, it had, from 1950 on, slowly manipulated regulations in favor of and provided support for the collectives known as *negdel*s. Incentives such as preferential use of pasture lands, exemption from taxation (Rosenberg 1977: 28–34; Goldstein and Beall 1994: 53), training for *negdel* members and particularly for leaders, higher payments for laborer-herders, and reductions in the number of animals from their private herds mandated for State purchase, stimulated many to join the *negdel*s. The State's active discouragement of private herders (with measures including higher taxes and higher quotas of animals to be sold to the State) and a shortage of labor as more and more herders became members of the collectives, prompted many wealthy herders to turn their animals over to the collectives. Gradual economic pressure worked better than the drastic and authoritarian policies of the Left Deviationist period. In 1956, private herders had 20 million animals, and the collectives controlled 3.9 million; by 1957, the numbers had shifted to 17.6 million privately herded and 5.2 million collectively herded; by 1958, they became 9 million to 14.5 million; and by 1959, they had tilted to 6 million to 16.9 million (Rupen 1966: 49). One student of pastoral organization in Mongolia estimates that in the last year of the 1950s more than 99 per cent of herders had joined *negdel*s, which managed 73.5 per cent of the country's livestock. Most of the remaining animals were part of the private herds of *negdel* members (Schmidt 1995: 81; Nobuharu 1996: 103–105).

Namkhainyambuu: Herder in a Collective

According to his autobiography *Khonini Khishig* or *Bounty from the Sheep*, Namkhainyambuu had a happy childhood while these changes occurred. He was born in 1948 in Songino *sum* in the *aimag* of Zavkhan, where, he wrote, the mountains stretched upward toward the sky like a file of caravans disappearing from sight. Both of his parents were herders, and they had three sons, of whom Namkhainyambuu was the oldest, and two daughters who were given away for adoption. These two girls grew up in comfortable economic circumstances, married, and moved away from Namkhainyambuu and his family. His sister Yavukhuu and her husband Ts. Sükhbaatar settled in the city of Darkhan with their eight children, preferring, as she said, city dust to sheep dung.

Like Mongol pastoral nomads from earliest times, he and his father, mother, and brothers journeyed throughout the year. Summer vacations were spent at Biangold spring at the Tariat river, and in winter his family settled along the eastern spine of the sacred Songino mountains. He writes that he loved his area of the country with its majestic brown mountains. The southern slope of the mountain cliff towered over fields where the smoke-holes of the house could be seen under the cliffs which served as shelter from the winds in the mountains.

There were streams everywhere. All around were more than twenty families and campsites and temporary animal shelters used in the spring and winter, where the animals would be fattened up on the rich pasture grasses and the females would become pregnant. Of his family's journeys, he writes,

> Our people passed through Santmargats *sum* and cut through the Hotgorin passage in the Great Mongolian Sand and came to the semi-desert areas of Arghal Khar and Ikh Baga Boral where almost every year they spent the winter. We prepared all night to migrate before crossing the Great Mongolian desert to Souvni Pass. After dark, we settled down to spend the night, and at dawn, the pack animals were loaded to move. After a few days, we would move again. The animals needed to be tended both day and night and the skills of strong herders were necessary.

Reveling in this pastoral life Namkhainyambuu stopped his formal education when he was ten years old. He writes that in 1958,

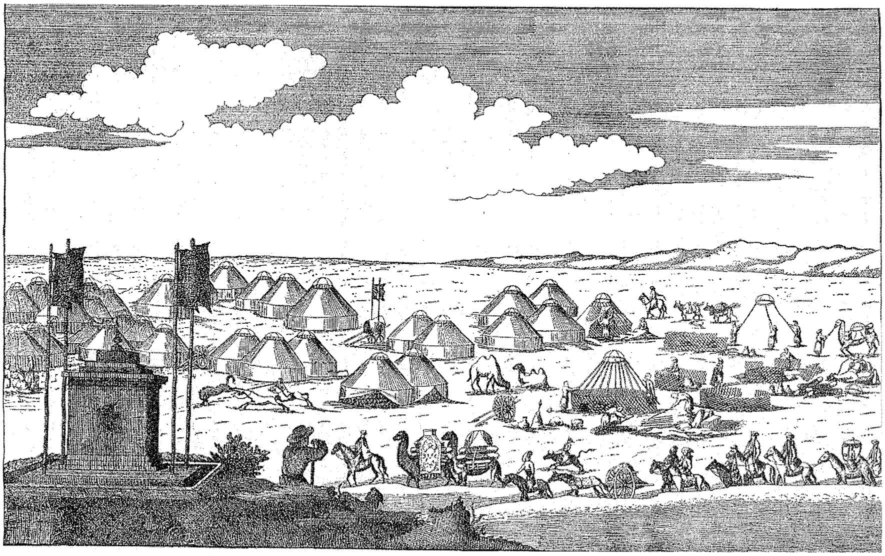
> I finished the fourth class. Some of our class children continued in the seven year school in the Tsetsen Uul *sum*, but the majority of us wished to go to the countryside to herd. The school cook made an effort to end each school year by giving out large sweet red buns with a thick quantity of sugar spilling out of them. I also got these buns when I finished the fourth class with honors, but I did not complete my education. Parents were pleased when their children finished primary school and doors to further education opened to them. But instead I opened the door to the university of life whose education lasts forever, not just the door to the school.

For Namkhainyambuu, 'the science of herding sheep was like being introduced to a thick book that one never finishes'. Throughout his life, he tried to educate himself, asserting that 'maybe you will find it ridiculous when I myself was barely educated. But I think that when a child is so keen to study, he can learn without going to school and when the wish arises in a small child it can lead to a great ocean of knowledge'. Yet, he writes 'I will be grateful all my life to the teachers who opened for me the golden pages of those books, which led me down the road of life and work'.

From childhood, adults encouraged Namkhainyambuu and noted that had 'quite a good eye for the herds'. As a youngster learning to become a skilled shepherd, he states that 'the herder was his teacher, the herds his subject, and the pastures his lecture hall'. He had no regrets about ending his education so early, nor did he wish to continue formal schooling later in his life. Thus when he was older, he turned down an invitation to study at the Agricultural Institute because he was already engaged in learning the practical science of raising sheep. He believed that if he studied theory, he would have nothing, 'as in the Tale of the Hunter who chased two rabbits at the same time and was left empty handed'.

His working life began with the *negdel*s already in place and dominant in the countryside. Namkhainyambuu's optimism, as revealed in *Khonini Khishig*, about the *negdel*s and conditions in Mongolia echoes the views of Owen Lattimore who wrote at that time that, 'today the Mongols are, I believe, better fed and better clothed than any other people in Asia. Their housing is probably at least as good as the average of any other Asian people. There are no depressed areas, no depressed classes, and because of underpopulation, there is no unemployment' (Lattimore 1962: 170). Though Lattimore does not cite them, he would surely have praised the *negdel*s, which were based upon collectives in the USSR. Unlike Lattimore, several other Western scholars were not as captivated by the *negdel*s.[1]

Namkhainyambuu generally emphasizes the positive features of the *negdel*s, particularly the innovations that improved and promoted herding. He mentions, for example, the introduction of trucks to facilitate movement. Because trucks were more efficient and could carry more weight than camels, the previous pack animals, many herders quickly switched to them. The resulting decrease in the camel population was striking: from a high of 859,100 in 1960, the number declined to 633,000 in 1970 and 591,500 in 1980 (Müller 1995: 183). With this boost to mobility, Namkhainyambuu and his family could, in his words, just follow the pastures. In some years, they moved twenty to forty times to find good pasture.



Nomadic life: breaking camp. Source: Henning Haslund-Christensen, *Jabonah* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1932), p. 29

This refrain of mobility repeatedly appears in Namkhainyambuu's work. He explains that 'keeping [the sheep] in one place is useless.' Because the animals require grass and plants from regions that had not been degraded, the herders had to migrate, an arduous task demanding great skill and endurance. While they moved, the animals 'needed to be tended both day and night.' The herder could not simply shift the animals from one location to another seemingly lush pasture. He had to know the quality and types of plants and grasses that are optimal at different times of the year and had to select sites that had adequate precipitation, were relatively free of biting winds and heavy snows, and had sufficient water for the animals. According to Namkhainyambuu, 'The herder had to be clear sighted and clever because it takes a lot of work and expensive transport to assure the animals good food,' with transport often provided by the *negdel*s. Despite his suggestions on migratory cycles, Namkhainyambuu concludes by noting that his advice should not be construed to be a rule or a law, but that each individual herder ought to make decisions on seasonal moves based on the specific conditions he faces and on his own successful experiences. In some parts of the country, grass was readily available within relatively discrete areas, which meant that herders did not need to migrate as frequently. In addition, each of the animals required different kinds of plants and grasses and different periods of access to water; one general rule could not be applied to them all. This final caveat echoes the government's and the *negdel*'s own policies. Their authoritarianism notwithstanding, they appear to have permitted herders leeway in managing their animals. In one particularly arid year, Namkhainyambuu even moved his animals to a neighboring province, which certainly lay beyond the grazing area assigned by government officials. This rapid move, known as an *otor*, usually involved a small group of herders who led the animals to faraway grazing areas without a simultaneous move of the main camp, a traditional herding strategy that was not banned by the government. His ability to migrate and to use the pasture customarily allocated to other herders indicates the need for and the availability of assistance and collaboration in times of disaster (Bruun 1996: 68; Fernandez-Gimenez 2000).

Namkhainyambuu also reveals that the government encouraged training and expertise for the herders. He himself could identify an astonishing range of plants, grasses, mountain ranges, and rivers and was well versed in traditional herding practices. He also knew about soil, topography, signs of changes in weather, and locations of water and forage and had developed criteria for selecting optimal campsites and seasonal pastures. The government sought to foster such knowledge by publishing in the very same year that the second collectivization effort began of a guidebook to herding by J. Sambuu, the Chair of the Presidium of the *Khural* (Sambuu 1956; Meserve 1987: 249–305). This compilation by such an important State official indicates that the government sought to encourage pastoral productivity. In that same vein, *Khonini Kishig*, written in the late 1980s, offers guidelines for herders. Namkhainyambuu himself (who remains a champion of the *negdel*s), has recently compiled a manual of detailed instructions on the proper care of sheep. In that work, he offers, based on his personal experiences, specific advice on herding. Its seven chapters, written sometime in the 1990s, cover more comprehensively than *Bounty From the Sheep* the following topics: methods of feeding and watering the herds in all seasons; artificial insemination and various methods of delivering, caring for, and weaning the lambs; selection of rams for the insemination process; increasing the yield of wool, milk, and meat from the sheep; satisfying the needs of the herds for food, shelter, and water; organizing the labor for the herding economy; and the medical treatment of herds. Such herds was essential to inexperienced herders who suffered from a lack of communication that had formerly been provided by the State.

In the *negdel* era, however, newly-trained veterinarians, many of whom were educated in the USSR or Eastern Europe, passed on these innovations on the local level. By 1989, there were 839 specialized veterinarians, 2,179 veterinary technicians, and 456 animal health workers in the country. The large number of such specialists contributed to the decline in animal deaths from the mid-1950s to the 1989, certainly a benefit to Namkhainyambuu (Edström 1994: 4).

The *negdel*s, according to Namkhainyambuu, promoted the livestock economy through new and better facilities. They encouraged the construction of temporary animal shelters in the herders' winter quarters, preferably in several locations, as they would sometimes move their animals even in the coldest weather. Namkhainyambuu approved of such buildings to protect the herds in winter, recommending that frozen dung be used to erect the sheds, but he abhorred impediments to animal mobility in summer and autumn. He sternly instructed herders not to 'fence in the sheep; let them be free and strong'. For some animals, the sheds were superfluous 'because the sheep who are born in the cold wind become impervious to the cold and have the ability to withstand the freezing wind'. Namkhainyambuu was less ambivalent about the *negdel*s support for the digging of wells. He writes that 'water is everywhere a jewel' and regards the building of wells as difficult but invaluable. Individual households dug and maintained hand and mechanical wells, and the government built the motorized wells. Still another *negdel* activity, which earned Namkhainyambuu's approval, was the production of hay and other forage. He pointed out that several winters of heavy snows had resulted in the deaths of numerous animals, despite the Herculean efforts of his entire settlement. The snow and frost had prevented the animals from reaching the life-preserving plants and grasses. The *negdels*' provision of fodder in such cases saved many animals and reduced the herders' helplessness in facing a demanding environment. Herders could have somewhat greater ability to cope with Nature. In particularly difficult winters, they could sometimes count on the government to dispatch airplanes to drop fodder for their animals.

Namkhainyambuu attests to increased mechanization, which was meant to promote productivity and to reduce the risks confronting herders. As a young boy, he first saw a tractor, whose driver was to marry a woman whom he referred to as his sister. Though his encampment initially was suspicious of and derided what Namkhainyambuu refers to as the 'red ant', most of them soon adopted the machine proffered by the authorities. Such equipment helped them to increase the production and the harvesting of the hay that could be fed to the animals in harsh winters. This mechanization, in turn, is evidence of the growth of industry in the country, the development of a working class, and gradual urbanization. Industry and crafts which, in traditional times, had been associated with the reviled Chinese now began to take hold and to influence the lives of herders. The new equipment could also assist in reaping harvests from the potato fields and vegetable gardens that belonged to Namkhainyambuu's *negdel*. In fact, however, most of the fodder, grain, and vegetables were produced in large State Farms. By 1960, there were only 25 State Farms but more than 350 *negdels* (Schmidt 1995: 81). These huge mechanized farms, with substantial storage facilities and sheds, were not only responsible for fodder and agricultural production, but also cross-bred animals, experimented with seeds, and opened up new lands. They also developed subsidiary activities such as the raising of poultry and pigs and the making of felt and leather. The cultivation of land in semi-arid plains, with scarce water resources and a short growing season, emulated the USSR's 'virgin lands' policy and met the same disastrous fate. Though the State Farms increased labor productivity[2] and ensured that the country was self-sufficient in flour (UB Post, August 21, 1996), they often damaged the so-called 'virgin lands'.

More successful was the government-sponsored policy of single-species herding, from which Namkhainyambuu benefited. It is no accident that Namkhainyambuu's work is entitled *Bounty From The Sheep*. His household tended sheep almost exclusively as part of a government plan which assumed that different animals demanded different expertise, migratory cycles, and pasture and water usage and that specialization would be more efficient and more productive. Namkhainyambuu does not address the merits of single species or mixed herding, but his description and advice mostly concerns sheep. The number of sartuul sheep, which Namkhainyambuu prized highly because of their fine pedigree, fertility, and output of wool, increased from 2000 in the 1960s to the current 350,000.

The State organized marketing and distribution of the meat, wool, and other animal products obtained from Namkhainyambuu and other herders. A bureaucracy of central and local planners devised annual production quotas for the *negdel*s, as well as longer-range figures as part of Five-Year-Plans. The State, through the Central Procurement Co-operative Union, dispatched trucks to collect the animals and animal products and to transport them to slaughter houses and processing plants (Schmidt 1995: 88). When Mongolia joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, an organization meant to promote commerce in the Communist world, in June of 1962, it traded these products almost entirely with the USSR and Eastern Europe. By 1980, it exported 3800 tons of butter and by 1990, 4400 tons of butter (MNSO 1997: 133; UB Post, May 20, 1997), and by the mid-1980s, it sent meat amounting to 3.5 million tons to the USSR In return for these products, the Central Procurement Co-operative Union provided consumer goods for herders, who could buy these products with the wages paid to them by their *negdel*s. The herders received 80 per cent of their projected wages on a monthly basis and the remaining amount, as well as bonuses, at the end of the year. Failure to meet production quotas meant that the herders would have to compensate the State from their private herds or, more likely, purchase animals at a reduced price from their *negdel*s to fulfill their obligations.

The State had reached its objective of turning the herders into wage earners – that is, semi-proletarians – but discovered that it still needed non-monetary incentives to foster productivity. As more animals became collectivized, herders became employees of the *negdel*s and resembled workers in other enterprises. Unlike such workers, however, herders were not as motivated to work hard by increased wages. Money did not mean much to them because their nomadism limited the goods they could carry, and assimilation of bulky and inessential products would be burdensome. Moreover, the few consumer goods available, which were often of poor quality, did not entice them. As one anthropologist wrote at the time, 'Economic incentives did not immediately work. Herdsmen did not want more money, partly because there were very few consumer goods to buy' (Humphrey 1978: 149; Campi 1996: 101).

Because money held no special attraction for herders, the State, as Namkhainyambuu mentions, used other incentives, such as titles and awards to encourage industriousness and productivity. Namkhainyambuu worked hard to be awarded the titles of 'Champion' or 'Hero of Labor' and to receive the 'Star of Sükhebaatar' and the 'Golden Soyombo' medals. He mentions, with pride, that his wife Jargal earned a 'Best Herder' gold medal and a 'Champion Youth' silver medal. Namkhainyambuu writes that this system of incentives started in school, with good students receiving induction into the Young Pioneers, an honor symbolized by the wearing of a distinctive outfit (Black 1991: 116). These honors led to tangible perquisites, such as Namkhainyambuu's and Jargal's trips to Moscow, his meetings with the Head of State Yumjaagiin Tsedenbal, and, just recently, access to an apartment in Ulaanbaatar for his family. Other bonuses for Heroes of Labor, which Namkhainyambuu does not mention, include a small monthly stipend and a slightly higher pension and opportunities to instruct or to give lectures to large groups. Such incentives no doubt prompted Namkhainyambuu to make his pledge of raising 10,000 sheep from the lambs granted to him by his *negdel* and, in 1971, stimulated herdsmen throughout the country to promise an 11 per cent increase in their herds.

Namkhainyambuu thus became a celebrity and was besieged by journalists whose limited knowledge of herding baffled him, just as his reaction to their articles irritated them. Sometimes the local authorities wrote his responses to interviewers and though Namkhainyambuu was often displeased with the scripts he was given, he did not 'dare express his true feelings because the atmosphere was not conducive to openness and people were frightened their careers might be in jeopardy if they disagreed with the administration'. In his autobiography, he makes the point that discussions should be frank and open with much warm conversation.

As Namkhainyambuu's successes became known, he received letters from people all over Mongolia asking advice on herding. In spite of his modesty, he acknowledged that his writings were of some importance and for that reason, 'I began to keep a small book of reminiscences which grew into *Bounty From the Sheep*'. The advent of *glasnost* in the former Soviet Union influenced Namkhainyambuu and encouraged him to express more openly some of his reservations about the socialist system that had supported him. He clearly championed greater autonomy and freedom for the herder from the arbitrary and often oppressive bureaucratic and governmental control.

Local government and *negdel* leaders certainly dominated the economy and society. Often either experienced herdsmen or trusted members of the MPRP, they assigned usage of water and pasture land to the herders in the *negdel*s, organized labor for the cutting of hay and other collective pursuits, and fostered new technologies and techniques that increased production. The leaders represented the *negdel*s in meetings of economic planners or government personnel and negotiated with the authorities for the needs (e.g. reducing quota requirements, obtaining permits for logging) of the collective. Namkhainyambuu writes that their success in averting problems and settling potential conflicts meant that 'there were no disputes over pasture lands', again perhaps too rosy an assessment by the erstwhile Mongolian shepherd-author. According to Namkhainyambuu, the *negdel* leaders, their underlings in the *suur*s and brigades within the *negdel*, and local government officials in the *sum*s or districts (which often encompassed the same population and territories as the *negdel*s but which represented the government) also instructed the herders, chiding the so-called lazy and badly-behaved and praising the more industrious. He describes a meeting during which a local official berated laggards so harshly that they 'were . . . made to sweat . . . and were coerced into promising to improve themselves'. Namkhainyambuu approves of such criticism by leaders, but he is candid in noting that the authoritarianism of the system prevented 'openness [because] people were frightened that their career might be in jeopardy if they disagreed with the administration'.

Nomadic pastoralism is inherently precarious. Herders face numerous threats such as the successive years of heavy snowstorms that Namkhainyambuu's household encountered. Different hazards afflicted different parts of the country. Some contended with drought, others with floods, and still others with the blizzards and frost which denied pasture to their animals. Herders also frequently confronted degraded land, forest fires, and earthquakes, not to mention diseased animals. The State and the *negdel*s provided insurance against such risks and potential losses. They helped to replenish the livestock or to transport hay for starving animals or to dispatch veterinarians to care for the ailing herds. In short, they attempted to minimize the risks associated with the nomadic pastoral economy.

Perhaps as important as the State's and the *negdel*s' boost to the herders' households were their innovations in medicine and social welfare. Before 1921, Buddhist monks provided rudimentary medical care, based on the principles of Tibetan medicine. Limited knowledge of public health, sanitation, and hygiene resulted in outbreaks of smallpox and other infectious diseases and in high rates of infant and maternal mortality (Cariceo 1994: 17–34). Starting in the 1920s, the State introduced modern medicine, but few doctors reached the countryside. The establishment of the *negdel*s, which often had centers that developed into small towns, facilitated State efforts to deliver medical care, at no cost, to the herders. The small towns would have clinics or hospitals, which is probably where Namkhainyambuu came across a Russian doctor when his parents took him for medical attention. Doctors could, if necessary, travel to encampments in distant locations in case of emergency. Herders with more serious ailments could be transported to larger and better equipped hospitals in Ulaanbaatar or other newly-built urban centers. The State provided medicines at no or little cost, though one anthropologist writes that 'the range of what was available was inadequate by our standards' (Goldstein and Beall 1994: 93). Nearly all had access to maternity rest homes where pregnant women stayed in the last weeks before giving birth and where they could be assured of good medical care. Such facilities underscored the State's pronatal policies, particularly from the 1960s on. Faced with a tiny population and thus a shortage of labor for industrial and infrastructure projects, the government had initiated a pronatal policy, granting payments for each birth, subsidies for children, and early retirements, pensions, awards, medals, and special status for mothers who had more than four children. It is no accident that one of Namkhainyambuu's sisters had eight children and that he has had nine children.

The other social benefits from the *negdel*s and the State also appealed to herders. Clothing allowances, paid vacations, and payments for child support served as means of retaining the loyalty of *negdel* members. Palaces of culture, libraries, a basic mail service (as reflected in the large volume of letters received by Namkhainyambuu), and newspapers and radio (which provided a heavy dose of political propaganda but which, according to Namkhainyambuu, offered valuable details about weather conditions) were also provided. The State recruited or compelled so-called volunteers such as students or urban dwellers to help herders during busy times. In addition, it ensured that income differentials among herders were minor, reducing the possibility of disputes or even conflicts between the prosperous and the average or deprived. Perhaps the most appreciated benefit was pensions. Most Asian and African lands do not offer pensions to their rural inhabitants, but the Mongolian State did so during the *negdel* era. Women could retire at the age of fifty-five, though they could start to receive their pensions earlier if they had four or more children. Men received their pensions at sixty. With such pensions, other subsidies, cash income, and their private animals, it is no wonder that 'these benefits and services placed Mongolia far ahead of other Third World nations such as China and India' (Goldstein and Beall 1994: 95).

The herders' children, including the young Namkhainyambuu, benefited from the State-sponsored educational system. The government set up schools in *sum* centers, providing relatively good salaries to teachers. It emphasized schools, in part because better educated herders might be less hostile to new techniques and machinery that would promote productivity. Children whose parents migrated with the herds lived in school dormitories, and the State covered all expenses for room and board. The success of this system may be gauged by the extraordinarily high rate of literacy in the countryside. Though Namkhainyambuu himself left school after the fourth class, he praised his teachers for teaching him to read and for 'introducing [him] to art and culture'. He attributed his voracious appetite for learning and reading everything from Mongolian classics to Marco Polo to Daniel Defoe to his teachers. Noting that he quit school because of his desire to move from book learning to 'life learning', he did not advocate that kind of abandonment of education for everyone. In fact, he repeatedly affirmed the value of education.

Despite many attractive features, the *negdel*s had drawbacks, some of which Namkhainyambuu alluded to. For example, he frequently castigated lazy herders who neglected their animals and failed to work properly. He noted that they also did not take precautions to protect the environment; their *gers* were dirty; and they were not hospitable to guests – not restraining their dogs, for example when visitors entered their house. Yet the *negdel*s rarely punished or fined the lazy and the incompetent.

Namkhainyambuu's observations about indolent and unskilled herders coincided with evidence about productivity during the *negdel* period. Though the number of animals increased, the livestock quotas for the Five-Year Plans were often not fulfilled or set so low that the herders could meet them. In 1976, 'all [was] not well with the animal husbandry sector' (Sanders 1977: 33),[3] and the Mongolian leadership was upset about 'unproductive losses due to disease and neglect'. Reports of such low productivity abound. Part of the difficulty lay in a number of years of abominable weather, with snows, frost, and wind storms, which resulted in depletion of the livestock. Another problem was that the yield of the pastures decreased because of overgrazing, drought, and soil degradation (Humphrey and Sneath 1996: 64–65).

However, the system of central planning and the command economy contributed to lower output and, often, to lower quality (Milne 1991: 4–6). For example, the penalties on herders for not fulfilling quotas were relatively minor and could often be evaded. The State also continued to provide wages to incompetent or indolent herders. It did not offer sufficient monetary incentives to increase productivity. In addition, even if herders favored their own private animals and showed less concern for the *negdel*'s herds, they generally would not be punished or upbraided. In sum, the system contributed to lower productivity.

The Market Economy and the Herder

Though Namkhainyambuu's autobiography, which was completed in 1989, ends on an upbeat note, he himself (and many other herdsmen) has not fared as well as he had hoped in the post-socialist era of the 1990s. His pledge in the conclusion of his work to raise twenty thousand sheep has not been fulfilled. Nor is there much assurance that he will achieve this objective. His long-cherished dream that at least one of his progeny would become a herder appears imperiled. Seven of his nine children have already committed themselves to work in towns and cities, attesting to the deterioration of the Mongol herding economy, and the other two, though still too young to select a career, live on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar and are not receiving the training or developing the skills that Namkhainyambuu considered to be essential for a life as a herder. The city has proved to be irresistibly attractive to his children. Increasingly, particularly after two terrible winters in 1999–2000 and 2000–2001, many have abandoned herding, prompting the Prime Minister to question whether pastoral nomadism has a future in Mongolia (Fang 2001).

Namkhainyambuu himself has witnessed a decline in his own status and roles. In recognition of his achievements, he was chosen as a member of the Central Committee of the MPRP in 1986 and again in 1990. In the second truly democratic election in Mongolian history in June 1992, he was elected to the *Khural* and served on its Health and Social Welfare Standing Committee and its Food and Agriculture Standing Committee. However, the Democratic Union defeated the MPRP in the *Khural* election of June 1996, and Namkhainyambuu lost his seat. When he was elected to the *Khural* in 1992, he moved his family to Gachuurt, a small settlement about twenty kilometers outside Ulaanbaatar. With the disarray after the fall of communism and the attendant cutbacks in education, he feared that the schools in Zavkhan had declined precipitously and thus sought a better education for his children in the capital, where they lived during the week in an apartment provided for their Labor Hero father by the State. He remained there after the unexpected victory of the Democratic Union in 1996, but lived in straitened circumstances, owning only about a hundred animals. In addition, the land in Gachuurt, which lay in close proximity to Ulaanbaatar, had been overgrazed and was badly degraded. To provide for his family, Namkhainyambuu commuted to Ulaanbaatar to work for two twenty-four hour shifts a week as a concierge in a dormitory at a local college. But during our latest visit in July 2000, we learned that he had suffered a stroke and was unable to work. His relatives and family were caring for him.

Many herders have shared Namkhainyambuu's difficulties in the transition after the collapse of socialism in 1990. In that year, demonstrations, hunger strikes, and other forms of protest caused the Politburo to resign in March and led the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party to abandon its seventy-year monopoly as the only political party in the country. Democratic reformers quickly founded new political parties and competed in the first genuinely free election in

Mongolian history in July 1990. Around that time, the USSR withdrew its troops and technical advisers from Mongolia, began to reduce subsidies, and limited Mongolian imports. Needing aid and an export market, the government turned to the West and international financial organizations (including the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank), which insisted on dismantling the command economy. Their representatives in Mongolia required austerity, minimalist government, reductions in the State budget and in subsidies, and tight monetary policies as prerequisites for economic assistance. Advocates of a market economy, they proposed privatization and liberalization of prices (generally, meaning hefty price increases for consumers) and trade (i.e. elimination of tariffs) as answers to Mongolia's economic problems. Their other objectives included devaluation of the currency, and banking and legal reforms designed to protect property rights. Such measures conflicted with the socialist State's social welfare, pension, health, and educational programs, all of which would have to be slashed (Schmidt 1995: 30–31). On several occasions, the international organizations threatened to suspend allocated aid money unless the government adhered to their strategies.[4] Unlike assistance from the USSR, which provided lump sum general funding (though with stifling political demands attached), the new aid centered around specific projects or specific technical help (Sanders 1996: 244–245; Griffin 1995: 173; Weber 1999: 11). The Western advisers sought to develop a market economy as rapidly as possible and promoted a policy of shock therapy as the best and most expeditious means of creating such an economy (Tideman 1998: 75–89). Some elite Mongolians in the cities subscribed to these views and helped to implement them. After the defeat of the MPRP in the *Khural* or Parliamentary elections of June 1996 and the accession to power of the Democratic Union, who were ardent supporters of the market economy, the pressure for privatization intensified, though the herding economy had moved toward privatization earlier.

Such a market economy model had been developed and applied to sedentary agricultural or industrial economies, but had not been tested in a society in which about one-third of the population sustained itself on pastoral nomadism. Several economists and officials questioned its validity, declaring that 'such tenets of economic theory as wealth accumulation, [and] the innate desire of individuals to acquire material goods' were not necessarily appropriate for Mongolia (Campi 1996: 92; Fritz 1998: 100–104). This brief essay cannot truly assess, in detail, the underlying assumptions and the impact of Western aid, particularly on herders (Wedel 1998). In any event, most of the grants and loans were allocated to mining, energy, and transportation, which influenced herders but did not dramatically alter their lives. Western advisers initially focused principally on industries and urban areas, paying less attention to the herder population. They cooperated with educated Mongolians, mostly descended from the old elites, who had scant links with the countryside, reflecting a growing separation of the urban and rural. The *Khural,* except for a few herders such as Namkhainyambuu, represented the interests of the townsmen. The herders did not have their own political party that could reflect their concerns and champion their rights.

The drive for privatization did affect the herders, though the effects differed in the diverse regions of the country. The three main sections, the desert/semi-desert, the eastern and central steppes, and the forest/mountain steppes reacted slightly differently, but the pace of privatization in all three regions was rapid. According to numerous observers, in certain areas of structural reform, particularly privatization, Mongolia has proceeded faster than any other country in the world (Schmidt 1995: 32). Within two years, in 1991 and 1992, the pastoral collectives had been abolished, and privatization had been completed. 224 joint stock companies emerged from the 255 *negdels*. Animals, not land, were privatized, but no individual or agency regulated rights to grazing land. Banner princes and *negdel* directors have had no counterparts in the 1990s in the management of the rangelands. Without institutions to regulate land usage and rights to water in wells, lakes, and rivers, disagreements have occurred, as some households have trespassed on the customary pasturelands of other herders. The response of intenational financial organizations to such difficulties has been to promote privatization of land, a risky venture in a country in which pastureland has been available to all. The Asian Development Bank argues that privatization of land will entice herders to maximize production and to invest in improvement of the land.

The *Khural* lifted limits on the size of private herds, permitting entrepreneurs and some of the *negdel* and State leaders to amass large numbers of animals. The same privileged individuals divided up the trucks, the machinery, and the *negdel's* other tangible assets. Some Mongolians viewed privatization as an 'unfair process which redistributed state property to relatives, friends, and powerful business interest groups' (UB Post, December 8, 1998). An American economist who actively supported privatization noted that 'the accomplishments in this sector have been tainted by persistent accusations of corruption. Numerous allegations of abuses by local officials have surfaced and the government has undertaken several investigations, none of which has led to any action' (Korsun 1995: 42). On the other hand, some blamed lazy and incompetent herders for not breeding and maintaining sufficient animals, thus creating their own difficulties (Bruun 1996: 82; Liao 1999: 85–94).

In any event, most herders either had barely sufficient animals for their needs or merely scraped by. Various authorities estimate that a household required about 100 to 125 animals to survive (Schmidt 1995: 50). Families with less than 75 head had to slaughter animals for food, and thus found it increasingly difficult to replenish their herds. One-quarter to one-third of herding families, nearly all of whom did not own the requisite number of animals, lived below the poverty line (Schmidt 1995: 56; UB Post, November 24, 1998; UB Post, April 20, 1999).

The gap between the rich and the poor widened considerably in the 1990s. Part of the difficulty stems from the large number of herders. The 1990 and later collapse of many industries and factories generated significant unemployment, particularly in provincial centers, and many of the unemployed returned to the countryside just when the herds were about to be privatized. The herder population in 1990 amounted to about 147,000, but, because of the stresses in the Mongolian economy, had more than doubled by 1993 and continued to increase. Many of the herders resented the newcomers, fearing the additional burden on the pasture lands (Mearns 1993: 95–98). The two groups clashed over grazing and water rights, contributing to the problems in the countryside. Compounding the difficulties, the newcomers had few of the skills necessary for herding (Erdenebaatar 1996: 58–110), and most became a part of the one-fourth to one-third of herders who lived below the poverty line. Namkhainyambuu wrote for these neophytes a guide to herding (still unpublished in Mongolia). The conflicts between these two groups, as well as the porous borders with Tuva and China that cannot be closely controlled, have contributed to considerable rustling, generating even greater disarray in the countryside.

The insistent calls for minimalist government with scant State involvement in the economy also had grave implications for herders. (The Western advisers who demanded government minimalism and austerity received their salaries, either directly or indirectly, from their own governments, an irony they did not wish to be reminded of.) Namkhainyambuu expressed great concern as privatization intensified and the role of the State diminished. He said: 'To be a State, a State must own something. If it owns nothing, it is left with nothing.' He was uncertain if privatization would ensure the welfare of the herders. Formerly, the State had provided herdsmen, through the press and the radio, with vital information about weather conditions, markets, and advances in the science and practice of animal husbandry. Yet these services were no longer available. In addition, the government did not control the increase in prices of such basic commodities as petrol and flour, nor did it maintain or build the new roads and bridges that the herders could rely upon to transport their products to market.

Before 1990, the State had paid the herders and the *negdel*s for animals and had brought them to market. With privatization, herders were on their own, and the State no longer guaranteed purchases. In addition, the State no longer transported animals and animal products to market. Herders who needed to sell sheep, goats, wool, cashmere, and other products to buy wheat, rice, tea, and other consumer goods were vulnerable. Those who herded in pasture lands far from towns often had to sell to middlemen who recognized that they had an advantage because herders could not, on their own, transport their products to market. They offered relatively low payments, and the herders, stymied by poor roads, bridges, and generally poor transport, as well as poor infrastructure for communications (Ishii 1997), were often forced to accept the prices offered by these traders. Because the State did not provide information through the media about market prices to herders, they were at an even greater disadvantage; they could not readily bargain with the traders.

Herders developed different strategies to cope with these difficulties. Quite a few moved their encampments closer to the cities or other settlements, the principal potential markets for their products, or at least close to roads. The greater the number of herders and the greater the number of animals they brought with them, the greater the degradation of the land around the urban centers. Degradation and desertification without doubt increased. A recent assessment rates 51 per cent of the pasture land, particularly near population centers, as medium degraded (Craven and Curtin 1998).

Yet Mongolia has an immense amount of land, and it may be wise not to exaggerate the threat of land degradation. Nonetheless, herders were not as mobile as before, a vital element in the sustainability of the pasturelands, and they permitted their animals to graze year-round on what were meant to be seasonal pastures. Some even built wooden sheds for winter, contributing even more to a stationary form of herding. A number of herders naturally stayed in specific pasture areas longer for social reasons. They enjoyed the conviviality and the bonds they had forged with neighboring herders and relished the opportunity to join in the celebration of festivals throughout the year. The abandonment of single-species herding and the resulting decline in mobility, which had been emphasized in the *negdel* period but had been downplayed in the process of privatization, meant that herders could not be specialists and lost the advantages associated with expertise.

Another herder strategy entailed seeking loans from banks to purchase new machinery, to dig wells, and to buy vehicles to facilitate migrations with animals. Credit would also enable herders to purchase the consumer goods they needed during winter and spring when they had scant incomes. They could sell animals and animal products only in late summer. Without bank loans, they had to barter with itinerant and often exploitative traders who knew that herders had little income at certain times of the year and would thus charge high prices for their goods, which herders had to pay. However, most Mongol banks established after 1990 were badly managed, often corrupt, and wracked with nepotism and favoritism, leaving them with scant credit to offer herders. With little money available, herders now generally barter animals for the goods they require. Such transactions naturally preclude taxation, further reducing government revenues.

The collapse of the USSR and the subsequent problems faced by Russia have added to the herders' woes. The USSR had been the principal market for Mongolian meat. In 1980, total meat exports amounted to 45,900 tons a year, but by 1998 that figure had been reduced to 15,000 tons. The economic downturn in their country meant that many Russians could not afford to pay for imported meat. In addition, the Russian government imposed tariffs on imported meat and established standards of quality which the Mongolian herders could not attain. The Western European nations have similarly high standards, which prevent imports of Mongolian meat. Herders are thus not readily linked to international markets, and poor roads and other infrastructure problems jeopardize links with domestic markets. The results have been predictable. Herders who in the *negdel* period had received ten kilograms of flour for each kilogram of meat now obtain only one kilogram of flour.

Without a sizable export market, herders had little choice but to hold on to their herds, which resulted in a significant increase in the total number of the five principal animals from about 25 million in 1990 to about 32 million in 1999. Rich herders could afford to sell only a few animals under these adverse market conditions, but poor herders were forced to sell livestock in order to obtain essential goods. As *The Economist* noted (1997: 57), 'Although the increasing size of the national herd is looked on as a matter of rejoicing by the country, it is in fact an indication of an ongoing slump in industries based on the livestock products.' The devastating winters of 1999–2000 and 2000–2001, which led to losses of about six million animals, relieved some of this pressure but left many with few or no animals.

Still another herder strategy, which has had mixed results, is a dramatic increase in the number of goats in Mongolia, a response to what appeared to be market demand. Learning of the high value placed on cashmere in the early 1990s, pastoralists increased the number of goats in their herds and have continued to do so despite the sharp drop in cashmere prices. In 1990, Mongolia had approximately five million goats (MNSO 1997: 141), and by 1999 the number had risen to eleven million. Because China, the other major producer of cashmere, also had not imposed limits on its herders and because of the decline in demand from recession-plagued Japan, the largest consumer of cashmere scarves, sweaters, etc., the market was glutted. Lacking guidance from the government, Mongolian herders have focused on quantity, not quality, which further undercuts the prices they can command. Animal health, nutrition, and genetic quality have not received much attention. An ill-fated 1980s experiment in crossbreeding with goats from Russia, which was designed to increase production but which actually lowered quality, has exacerbated the herders woes. They have learned the hard way that 'large numbers of goats are no guarantee of wealth' (Mead 1999: 60).

To protect the relatively new industry of cashmere processing, the government, recognizing that processed cashmere was more lucrative, banned the export of raw cashmere in April 1994. To buttress this argument, an officer of a German foundation estimated that 60 kilograms of raw cashmere would be valued at 2,000 German marks while the same quantity of processed cashmere would be worth 80,000 marks. However, under pressure from champions of so-called free trade such as the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank, and other financial organizations, the government lifted the ban by October 1996 but imposed an export tax on cashmere, which has not been well enforced. With China and its traders buying up most of Mongolian raw cashmere, the native processors have insufficient quantities for their factories (see Bulag, this volume). The large number of goats has also placed a great burden on the available land. As one writer notes, 'Mongolia must remember that in some countries goats have destroyed pastures and left them as useless drybeds' (Mongol Messenger 1997). Adaptation to temporary market demands has not, in this case, served the herder.

Having abandoned the *negdel*s and having encountered serious problems shortly thereafter, many herders turned to the traditional system of organization, known as the *khot ail*, for support (Szynkiewicz 1993: 166–167). Camping together, the *khot ail* members, who were often, but not always, relatives occasionally pooled their labor, tending each other's animals and cooperating in transport of animals and animal products. The *khot ail* were not permanent and would be reconstituted at different times of the year and would vary in size depending on the location. In summer, they were often larger, as members could cooperate in the myriad, labor-intensive chores, such as milking, required at that time of the year; in winter, they were frequently smaller, reflecting the limited grazing available in any one location at that time of year. In desert areas, they consisted of relatively few households while in steppe and mountain regions, they tended to be larger because of the more plentiful grazing.

Even so, with the collapse of the *negdel*s, individual households required labor and turned for assistance to their own children and to voluntary associations. The 'volunteers' of the era of the collectives, such as students and urban dwellers, were no longer available to assist in harvesting, digging wells, potato gathering, and other chores. The change to multi-species herding, which was, in part, devised as a strategy to reduce the risks of dependence on specialized, one-species herding without State insurance in times of natural disasters or other failures, necessitated more labor. Herders' children were often recruited to perform the work, compelling them to drop out of school. Voluntary associations including the *khorshoo*, or cooperative, among others, have emerged, often serving, with the local government agency known as the *bag*, as *de facto* regulators of usage of pasture land and water. They have also cooperated in searching for lost animals, gathering firewood, using machinery, transportation, and clearing pastures after heavy snows. An even larger organization, known as the *neg nutgiinkhan* (people of one place), has also developed, but its significance and its effectiveness may not be clear for some time.

The burdens on women have also increased with the collapse of the *negdel*s (Skapa and Benwell 1996; Benwell this volume). Without assistance from the other women in the *negdel*, individual women now undertake greater responsibilities in the households. They not only cook, sew, wash, produce butter, yogurt, and cheese, and care for children but also milk the animals and fashion boots and hides, among other chores. Women, traditionally entrusted with the responsibility of the welfare of the household under a generally clear-cut division of labor between the sexes, have also been affected by the reductions in State services in and support for education, pensions, and health. They have to spend more time on daily chores without the assistance of the *negdel*s. The breakdown of the *negdel*s therefore has imposed additional tasks and burdens on women. Female-headed households have encountered even more difficulties because they typically have fewer animals and are short of labor. They constitute a significant segment of the poverty-stricken in the countryside.

Without State support and subsidies for fuel, fertilizer, and machinery, agricultural production has declined. Though Mongolia had been self-sufficient in flour before 1990, it has, in the last few years of the 1990s, imported substantial quantities of wheat. The country, as a whole, has become increasingly dependent on imports of cereals and vegetables, which come mostly from China (Rossabi 2003). Despite some calls for an imposition of a tariff on imported foods and complaints of adulterated or insect-laden imported flour from China, Mongolia continues to rely on imported foods. Perhaps more significant for the herders, quotas for the preparation of hay have frequently not been fulfilled due to lack of machinery, fuel, or government support. Herders thus cannot always rely on hay as supplements for their animals or in emergencies as essential feed. Such an emergency afflicted herders in the winters of 1999–2002. Snow and ice prevented the animals from reaching the life-saving grass. Without supplies of hay and fodder, several million animals died.

Privatization and the simultaneous decline in State support have heightened the risks faced by herders. Veterinarians have not been as readily available, and if they are, herders often bear the burden of paying higher fees for their services. Herders cannot expect the State to help them restock if a bad winter or disease decimates their herds, though some philanthropic organizations assisted them in 1999–2000 and 2000–2001. Herding entails numerous risks, including shortage of water, heavy snows, degradation of pastures, and dangerously rapid climatic changes. Herders, in addition, have scant access to livestock insurance, which endangers the livelihood of poor and middle income herders in case of natural disaster. Most herders supported the initial privatization, but Namkhainyambuu, among others, now wonders whether private ownership compensates for the loss of State support in the forms of digging of wells, provision of fodder, and trucks for transport, which previously reduced the risks in an exceptionally perilous occupation. In addition, herders cannot rely on State assistance after a climatic or other kind of disaster.

The risks to the health of the individual herders have also increased. The State health care budget declined from 5.8 per cent of gross domestic product in 1991 to 3.8 per cent in 1997. As of January 1, 1999, herders have had to pay for their own medical insurance (Economist 1998). The State will cover only those below the poverty line. However, because the poverty line has been set so relatively low, herders, with meager resources, have been compelled to contribute to their medical insurance, which the State earlier provided free or with mere token payments by participants. Many reports document the decline of medical care in the countryside in the 1990s. Quite a number of maternity rest homes, which housed women in the last days of pregnancy, have closed; medicines are in short supply; standards of sanitation in local clinics and hospitals are poor; and diagnostic tools, such as X-rays, needles, and blood supplies are unavailable or dangerously ill-maintained or tainted. No wonder that a journalist traveling in the South Gobi wrote that 'while wages had been low under the socialist system, no one had really been in want even in the remote regions because the state provided for the basics of life: health care, education, jobs and pensions' (Kakuchi 1998: 3). Certainly there must have been some in socialist days who did not have access to these basics, but the number of such individuals was relatively small.

Similarly, education, another State service, has suffered from financial difficulties. Government expenditures on education fell from 11.5 per cent of gross domestic product in 1990 to 6.7 per cent in 1996. The need for child labor in the privatized herding economy led to a substantial increase in school drop-outs during the 1990s. The Minister of Education estimated on August 25, 1998 that truancy rates for 1998–1999 would increase to about 23 per cent, and most of the drop-outs would be children of herders (UB Post, August 25, 1997). State-mandated hikes in tuition and demands that herdsmen pay for the dormitories, food, and supplies for their children in boarding schools have contributed to the growing truancy rate, as some herders either cannot afford such costs or simply perceive scant value in education for their children. Generally low salaries and occasional delays of payment in compensation have persuaded some fine teachers to leave the profession. In addition, adult herders' knowledge and education have been compromised by the virtual cessation of previously State-provided newspapers (which, to be sure, were full of political propaganda, but also had useful information on weather, regional news, and herding) and by the lack of batteries for radio receivers.

Several observers have misgivings about the present relative lack of State involvement in the pastoral economy. Though they reject the authoritarian, despotic model of pre-1990 Mongolia, they assert that the State now has to play a greater role than it did in the 1990s if the vast majority of herders are to sustain their pastoral nomadic way of life and concurrently are to have access to the veterinary, medical, educational, and cultural opportunities of the modern world. They contend that a laissez-faire government will not meet the needs of the herders. One anthropologist who studied the effects of privatization concluded that the notion of pastoralists' independence is 'but a romantization [sic] of Mongolian nomadism and that the present situation of a total rolling back of the state exposes herders to conditions which will be unbearable in the long run' (Schmidt 1995: 1). A number of rangeland specialists have concluded that regulations by the State or by locally elected managers, perhaps the leaders of the *sum*s or the heads of the four to seven *bag*s that constitute a *sum*, are essential for sustainable management of the Mongolian pasturelands. Voluntary institutions could be invaluable, and foreign specialists have suggested that the State could provide long-term leases to pasture-land to the *neg nutgiinkhan* as a means of averting conflicts among individual herdsmen over land and water. Whatever the specific means, the State, contrary to the views of the fervent proponents of privatization and the market economy, needs to play a role in order to stabilize the pastoral economy.[5] State regulations are essential, for example, to prevent the indiscriminate ravaging of the land and the environment by the growing number of gold mining and oil drilling companies, as well as the despoliation of the land by cars and trucks speeding across the steppes.

Namkhainyambuu and the Market Economy

In interviews in April and May 1999 and July 2000, Namkhainyambuu indicated that he concurred with the view that the State needs to be more active in supporting the herding economy. He had opposed the precipitous abandonment of the *negdel*s, partly because they emphasized cooperation among herdsmen.[6] Partly too the *negdel*s taught basic skills and introduced new techniques to the herders. He regretted that political pressures and attempts to please international financial organizations had prompted the government to promote the privatization of herds at such a rapid pace. According to him, 'now in Mongolia there is no sense of caring for others so when a trader buys wool today, he thinks only of his own profit'. He was critical of the Democratic Union, which took power in 1996, for accelerating the privatization process and further undermining the herding economy. In our latest interview with him, he appeared delighted with the sweeping victory of the MPRP in the *Khural* elections of July 2000. He assumed that the MPRP, with its strong links to the countryside, would pay more attention to and provide greater assistance to the herders.

He cautioned against blindly following foreigners and accepting the foreign models forced on Mongolia. Mongolia does not, according to him, need foreign teachers and counselors to advise on herding, for Mongolians have herded successfully for centuries. Namkhainyambuu, for example, has heard of foreigners advising on the selection of animals in each herd, a situation which he deplores. He is, in particular, skeptical about foreign loans, claiming rightly or wrongly that much of the money has been siphoned off to the relatives of influential figures in the government or in business.

Namkhainyambuu proposes more State involvement in the economy and disputes the view that democracy entails a limited role for government. The State is needed, (1) to provide and maintain roads and bridges to permit herders to reach their markets, (2) to prevent profiteers from raising the price of petrol beyond the reach of herders, (3) to conduct research on plants, soils, and animals in order to promote productivity, and (4) to supervise the construction of wells and to make preparations for emergencies. According to Namkhainyambuu, Mongolian herders face natural disasters every five to seven years. Namkhainyambuu is apprehensive that the past decade has sent the wrong message to herders. He asserts that the more turbulent times in the 1990s have permitted 'those who rob to have power' while 'those who labor have little or no power'. State involvement and rewards for hard workers would, he believes, arrest such corruption and would emphasize the value of labor.

Namkhainyambuu is also critical of many contemporary practices, including the wastefulness in treating hides at the processing plants, the poor quality of industrially-made goods, the replacement of wooden pails with iron buckets which rust out, and the poorly equipped wells which cannot function because much of the gear has been stolen. Though artesian wells may have been dug, they have become useless, leaving the pastures too often without a water source. Namkhainyambuu deplores the theft of both communal and private herds and decries the devastation of the pastures because of the growing number of roads for cars. Although he welcomes radio and television, which broke the isolation of the herders' world, he regrets some of the cultural changes in methodology and fashion. He hates to see children herding animals from motorcycles while their parents watch through binoculars.

It would be misleading to end with a characterization of Namkhainyambuu as moralistic, judgmental, and condescending about herders who prize profit rather than patriotism. He is, in fact, well-read, self-educated, and witty, with a subtle sense of humor. Meetings and interviews with Namkhainyambuu disabuse any notion of him as a priggish and didactic ex-Communist. Rather he is dedicated and patriotic but well aware and tolerant of human foibles (including his own). His current aim is to promote a different course for the Mongolian herding economy from the one pursued in the 1990s. He does not necessarily disapprove of the privatization of the herds but seeks State regulations and involvement to prevent excessive disparities between rich and poor herders, to foster a sustainable use of the pasturelands, which entails considerable mobility for the herders and their animals, and to provide everyone with better educational, economic, and medical facilities.

Authors' Note

This Introduction is not an exhaustive study of the Mongolian pastoral economy over the past five decades but simply provides background for an understanding of Namkhainyambuu and his *Khonini Khishig*. It is an altered and edited version of our Introduction to *Bounty From the Sheep* (Cambridge: White Horse Press, 2000). We wish to thank Ole Bruun, Melvyn Goldstein, and Robin Mearns for insights into the Mongolian herding economy.

Notes

1 See the previously cited work by Rupen for views divergent from those of Lattimore.
2 See George Murphy (1964: 58) on the supposed disadvantages of nomadic agriculture in Mongolia.

3 Despite the manifold problems of the *negdels*, Robin Mearns (1991: 28) writes 'The enthusiasm today for the market economy and official condemnation of earlier mistakes . . . should not detract from the real achievements made during this period.'

4 Some Mongolians viewed this so-called reform program as an ideological experiment conducted by the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and applied much as the theory of by-passing capitalism was applied in the communist period, to the benefit of external interests (Economist Intelligence Unit 1994: 38). On the use of such a tactic, the Economist Intelligence Unit (1995: 49) writes that The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has threatened to withhold a $15m credit allocation this year if the government continues to maintain its ban on the export of raw cashmere.

5 See the works of Humphrey and Sneath and Müller for trenchant analyses of the need for regulations on land and water use rather than the total privatization advocated by some free-market advisers to the Mongolian government.

6 For the attitudes of other herders, see Jill Lawless (June 13, 1999) quoting a herder she visited: 'My parents firmly believe that the socialist time was much better than this. They remember it fondly. They say things like, "all for one and one for all". Now you have to rely completely on yourself.' A similar view is expressed in Richard Tomlinson (December 7, 1998: 200), who quotes another herder: 'Compared with the socialist time, life is worse. Before we had a regular income. Now we have to depend on the animals.'

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9

A Preliminary Study of Buddhism in Present-Day Mongolia

Agata Bareja-Starzynska and Hanna Havnevik

Mongolia, and in particular the capital Ulaanbaatar, is today strongly influenced by international society. The city is rapidly changing through the global exchange of commodities and the influence of modern mass media, such as global TV and IT-communication. Cultural plurality consisting of Mongol, Russian and Western elements is visible. Both Asian and Western tourism to Mongolia have increased strongly during the 1990s, and so have Christian proselytism and Buddhist activity. There are today large social and cultural differences between the capital and the countryside. In Ulaanbaatar the changes are felt the strongest, and the differences between global influence and local culture are striking.

At present Mongolia is undergoing rapid and radical change. It is squeezed between two major world powers, Russia and China. One conspicuous element of its regained freedom is a strong religious revitalization. Only after the democratic changes in the early 1990s, when religious freedom was granted, could full-scale religious activity start. Today a large number of Mongols, from the city and the countryside alike, flock to the Buddhist monasteries in the capital to receive blessings, to venerate the various buddhas and bodhisattvas, and to ask admittance for their sons or daughters. Buddhism is memorized, re-learnt, re-enacted and re-created from texts no longer or only partly understood. Religious objects and books hidden during the purges in the 1930s, old sacred objects which evoke memories from the past, are gradually being retrieved and offered to trusted lamas or to monasteries.[1] Buddhist teachers, mainly from Tibetan exile communities, assist in general teaching. It appears that a large number of the young clerics in the temples in Ulaanbaatar originate from the countryside.[2] Old men, who used to be monks when young, those not killed in the 1930s, again wear the robes of the *sangha* and participate in the ritual activities in the re-opened monasteries. Old religious women shave their heads and wear monastic colors, like Buddhist nuns.

Lay-people of both genders, old and young, give offerings, make circumambulations, turn prayer-wheels, consult astrologers, request prayers to be read, and participate in religious rituals and festivals. They offer money to deities and sacred objects both inside and outside the temples, they smear butter-offerings on statues, on sacred pillars, and on the walls of the temples. Matches, considered valuable in traditional Mongol culture, are glued to sacred objects. Paper-strips, with names and prayers dedicated to deceased relatives, are pasted on prayer-wheels outside Gandantegchenlin Monastery. Old people make prostrations on boards in front of *stupa*s and temples and mutter *mantras* counted on their rosaries.

One of the most visible aspects of lay-people's everyday religious activity is their consultation of astrologers. They ask for advice on which prayers to request monks and nuns to perform on their behalf. Prayers are read in order to obtain economic prosperity, good health, and a long life both for relatives or for oneself. Some such prayers require offerings of butter, dough, milk or alcohol. Worshippers give donations to the monasteries in form of money, religious objects and books, cattle, meat, milk-products, and tea. Individual monks are supported by the laity as well. In the temples it is common to see religious specialists teach lay-people how to pray and perform simple rituals, offerings or other acts of devotion.

Contrary to the theories of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s postulating that secularization follows in the wake of industrialization and modernization (Berger 1967; Wilson 1976), there is the tendency today to see globalization as a two-way process, that is globalization and localization, creating both similarity and differentiation as local identities, often religious and sometimes fundamentalist, become revitalized.[3] Among many peoples of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, secularism is actively fought against. The revitalization of indigenous religions helps to reformulate and strengthen cultural identity, and it is used in social and political protest and in order to demarcate ethnic boundaries in the processes of nation-building. Political Islam is one example (Turner 1994: 77–94), the revitalization of Buddhism and political protest during the late 1980s in Tibet is another (Schwartz 1994), and the re-establishment of Buddhism in Mongolia is a third. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been a revival of the Orthodox Church in Russia and in ex-Communist Southeast Europe. Evangelicals seem to thrive throughout the region. In the introduction to *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (1999) the editor, Peter L. Berger, strongly refutes earlier theorizing:

> The world today . . . is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that the whole body of literature by historians and

> social scientists loosely labeled 'secularization theory' is essentially mistaken. (1999: 2) . . . *counter*-secularization is at least as important a phenomenon in the contemporary world as secularization. (ibid.: 6)

The History of Buddhism in Mongolia

The Tibetan form of Buddhism was disseminated among the Mongols in the thirteenth century, mainly by the Sakyapa (*Sa skya pa*) order.[4] Though familiar with Buddhism through their neighbors, the Tanguts or the Uighurs, the Mongols became seriously interested in Buddhism through their close contacts with Tibet. After sending expeditions to Tibet, the Mongol ruler over Gansu, prince Godan, summoned the master of the Sakya school, Sakya Pandita (*Sa skya Pandita*) to Mongolia in 1246, and soon Godan and his court converted to Buddhism.

In Khubilai (Qubilai) Khan's reign (1260–1294) Tibetan Buddhism became politically significant. Khubilai Khan, founder of the Yuan dynasty in China, was familiar with Buddhism from an early age, and saw the possibility of legitimizing his rule over non-Mongolian people by employing the old Indian and Buddhist ideology of the *cakravartin*, the universal ruler. He followed the example of the Tangut rulers, who had made Buddhism a state religion (Sperling 1994). The dual principle of 'patron and priest' (*yon-mchod*) was inaugurated, where the Mongol Emperor acted as patron and protector to the Tibetan Phagpa Lama Lodro Gyaltsen (*'Phags pa bla ma blo gros rgyal mtshan*, 1235–1280), who in return became his spiritual advisor and preceptor.

With the propagation of Buddhism among the Mongols, the scriptures were translated into Mongolian from Tibetan and Chinese, often via the Uighur language. Buddhism remained, however, primarily the religion of the royal family and the court. With the fall of the Yuan dynasty in 1368, Buddhism declined among the Mongols, although it did not die out completely (Jagchid 1971), especially among the Western Mongols. Shamanism again became the most widespread religion all over Mongolia. During the hundred years of the Yuan dynasty both Tibet and China were ruled by the Mongols, but when Yuan power in China weakened, Tibet re-asserted her independence and did not reinstate the relationship of 'patron and priest' with the following Ming dynasty, although later dynasties in China claimed to inherit from the Yuan this relationship with Tibet.

During the sixteenth century, when rivalry was strong between the Western and the Eastern Mongols for all-Mongol supremacy, Buddhism was again used to legitimize the ruling faction. Altan Khan from Tümed, not related by blood with the Mongol Chinggisids, met the head of the Gelugpa (*dGe lugs* *pa*) school Sonam Gyatso (*bSod nams rGya mtsho*, 1543–88) in Kökönuur in 1578. Here titles were exchanged and the dual principle of 'patron and priest' re-established. Now, as in the past, Mongol military and economic support was used by a Tibetan religious order, this time the Gelugpa, in its fight for supremacy in Tibet. In return Altan Khan gained the legitimacy of his rule over all Mongols, especially because he was recognized by the Tibetan lama as the reincarnation of Khubilai Khan, the Chinggisid. Tibetan schools of Buddhism zealously resumed their missionary work among the Mongols. The most active was the Gelugpa order, although the Sakyapas, the Kagyupas (*bKa' brgyud pa*), and the Nyingmapas (*rNying ma pa*) were also present.

The Mongols came under the control of the Manchus, who established the Qing dynasty in China in 1644, which resulted in the division into Inner Mongolia, under the direct control of the Qing Dynasty, and Outer Mongolia. Buddhism continued to spread, and the dominant role played by the Gelugpa order was partly a result of the support given by the Manchus. The Qing policy of pacifying the Mongols, using Buddhism as one of the tools, was largely successful. With a great part of the male population enrolled in monasteries, Mongol military power was severely weakened. The Manchus actively fought the followers of the Karma Kagyu (*Karma bKa' brgyud*) tradition both in Tibet and in Mongolia. Ligden Khan from Chahar, who was entitled to be the Mongol ruler, and who was a follower of the so-called 'Red Tradition',[5] was defeated by the Manchus. The Manchus also attempted to balance the power of the Mongolian nobility and the Buddhist clergy; they played Mongols and Tibetans up against each other. In order to prevent the Mongolian aristocracy from controlling the religious institutions, several laws were issued, among them one saying that a male reincarnation could be of noble origin, but not if he was the elder son of a ruling prince (Pozdneyev 1978: 334). Usually reincarnations were found among the Tibetans and brought to Mongolia at a young age.

The spread of Buddhism in Mongolia was supported by Mongolian aristocrats who issued several laws to destroy Shamanism, among them the Code of Zasagtu Khan (1558), the religious bill of Altan Khan (1577), and that of Sidütü gabchu (1578) (Heissig 1953: 493). In seventeenth century Eastern Mongolia, Neyichi toyin became the most active Buddhist missionary. Oirat Zaya Pandita was the most effective among the Western tribes.[6] Due to the threefold support from the Manchus, the Mongol nobles, and the Tibetan lamas, the Mongols were completely converted to Buddhism in the seventeenth century. Tibetan Buddhism remained the main religion and the most important cultural force in Mongolia up to the revolution of 1921.

The indigenous religion, Shamanism, was suppressed and did not play any important role after the seventeenth century (Heissig 1953), but shamanistic elements were integrated into Mongolian Buddhism. Shamanist deities became a part of the Buddhist pantheon, for example the White Old Man (*Tsagaan Ebügen*). The cult of the *obo*, i.e. a heap of stones, where offerings were brought to the local deities, continued to coexist with the new religion. Mongolian shamanism continued to live on in Buddhist camouflage, and Shamanist prayers collected by scholars in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries were full of Buddhist elements (Poppe 1927).

Historical and cultural ties between Mongolia and Tibet have thus been strong since the thirteenth century, and at the beginning of the seventeenth century Mongolia came under direct Tibetan cultural influence. Mongolian monks were often educated by Tibetan teachers and in monasteries in Tibet. In Buddhism, especially in its Tibetan form, ties between the teacher (*guru*), in Tibetan *lama* (*bla ma*), and his pupil are important. Mongolia became a pupil of Tibet and looked upon its teacher with great reverence. The bulk of Buddhist scriptures were translated into Mongolian from Tibetan, and many Tibetan chronicles (Heissig 1953; Bira 1978), epics, legends, poems, and songs found their way from Tibetan into Mongolian culture (Damdinsuren and Tsend 1976). Tibetan medicine, astrology, and divination intermingled with the Mongolian practices of these skills.[7] Buddhist art flourished in Mongolia under Tibetan and Chinese influences.[8] Tibetan official titles, especially those in the monastic hierarchy (Pozdneyev 1978: 221–234), and Tibetan personal names (in Mongolian pronunciation) were extensively used.[9] Even the language of the Buddhist liturgy in Mongolia became Tibetan by the eighteenth century, regardless of the fact that all canonical texts had already been translated into Mongolian. Mongolian religious masters were bilingual and started composing their scholarly works in the Tibetan language, the *lingua franca* of the Tibetan Buddhist world.[10]

The main religious figure in Outer Mongolia (Khalkha) was the reincarnated lama called the Bogdo Gegen (*rJe btsun dam pa*). He was regarded as the reincarnation of the Tibetan master Taranatha (1575–1635),[11] who in turn was seen as the fourteenth in the line of reincarnations starting with the historical Buddha Sakyamuni.[12] The first Bogdo Gegen, or Öndör Gegen, was named Zanabazar (1635–1723) and was the grandson of Tüshetü Khan Gombodorzhi. He was, and is still, venerated not only as a religious figure, but also as a national hero. He produced exquisite works of art, mainly statues of deities cast in gold, and he gave Buddhism a Mongolian flavour by composing prayers in his mother tongue which were recited to Mongolian melodies. He also invented Mongolian-style robes for the clergy. The popularity of Zanabazar was seen as a threat by the Manchus, and from 1757 onwards it was decided that succeeding reincarnations of the Bogdo Gegen had to be found among the Tibetans. The Eighth Bogdo Gegen (1870–1924), who resided in Urga (now Ulaanbaatar), emulated the example of the Tibetan Dalai Lamas, and became the theocratic or hierocratic ruler (Bogdo Khan) when Mongolia gained her independence in 1911. Buddhism became so important in the life of the Mongols that Ivan M. Maiskiy estimated that there were about 115,000 monks in 1918.[13] According to Pürevjav and Dashzhamts: 'In Outer Mongolia there were some 583 temple complexes, plus an additional 260 religious meeting places of various kinds' (1965: 166, quoted in Moses 1977: 125).

The Persecution of Buddhism in Mongolia

After the disintegration of the Qing dynasty and the period of an independent Outer Mongolia from 1911 to 1924, the Mongolian People's Republic, established in 1924, became closely controlled by the USSR until 1991. After the revolution of 1921, the Bogdo Gegen remained the influential religious figure in Mongolia, but after his death in 1924 the Communist government forbade the search for his reincarnation. When in 1921, Mongolia became a satellite state of the Soviet Union, persecution of Buddhism started, particularly from 1936 onwards. High lamas, reincarnations, and monks in high positions were executed, while ordinary monks were expelled from the monasteries, which were looted and destroyed with the help of modern military equipment (Pürevjav and Dashzhamts 1965: 248). Baabar writes, '. . . in 1937 through 1938 alone, with Soviet help, 16,631 lamas were persecuted, mostly shot. . . . In 1936 to 1937, three consecutive campaigns were launched against lamas who were then killed en masse' (1999: 363).[14]

In 1990 the Mongols were finally able to initiate research into this dark chapter of their recent history and in 1992 the historian M. Rinchin and others excavated a burial ground not far from Mörön in the Khövsgöl *aimag* where the remains of more than one thousand lamas were found (Baabar 1999: 364). In 1940 there were only 251 monks officially listed. The rest had been killed, deported to Siberia or forced to marry (Baabar 1999: 174). In addition to the killings of the lamas, a large-scale appropriation of monastic property took place. In a secret recommendation to the Politburo members in 1921 Lenin wrote:

> . . . We must confiscate the property of the monasteries and temples in the most resolute way and as fast as possible. We can thus obtain funds amounting to several hundred million golden rubles. . . and maybe several billion rubles (A letter from Lenin, quoted in Baabar 1999: 307).

Priceless religious statues and objects were taken away from the monasteries and sent to the Soviet Union, where they were melted into bullion, sold on the international antique market or kept in Russian museums. Invaluable religious texts, some written in golden letters and enclosed in beautiful bookcases, were removed before the monasteries were laid in ruins. In the hills of Kharkhorin book-fires were burning for months.[15] Monks and lay-people tried their best to hide away whatever could be saved, burying religious objects and texts in the ground or in caves in the mountains. Only a small percentage of Mongolia's religious artistic and textual heritage is today displayed in Mongolian museums, monasteries, and libraries.

A handful of monasteries came under the protection of the Communist State, partly due to a delegation sent by President Roosevelt in 1944 to the Soviet Union and Outer Mongolia. Stalin ordered the Mongol leader Choibalsan to open temples. Baabar writes:

> Choibalsan did not have a single temple or monastery that was not destroyed nor did he have a single lama who was well versed in religion, and Stalin knew it. . . . Gandan, one of the few monasteries which was spared major damage, was repaired and reopened and a few 'trustworthy' lamas were assigned to hold religious ceremonies there. . . . Kharkhorin and Erdeni Zuu (Dzuu) monasteries were also taken under state protection because they had not been too severely damaged (Ibid: 402).[16]

Buddhism in Mongolia after 1990

The attempt to eradicate Buddhism during the Communist era led some to the assumtion that although Communism did not completely wipe out Buddhism, an erosion of religious belief and practice and a thorough secularization of Mongolian culture would follow in the wake of modernization. In 1977 Larry W. Moses wrote the following in *The Political Role of Mongol Buddhism*:

> By all available evidence, Buddhism no longer exists as a political, economic or spiritual form in the Mongolian People's Republic (p. 265). [Buddhism] disappeared as it did, with little evidence that there will ever be a revival (p. 261).

However, as the democratic changes after 1990 sifted through all layers of society, and people started to believe that they were indeed free to make their own decisions regarding their spiritual lives, Buddhist religious activity, both private and public, in the center as well as in the periphery, grew rapidly. In the new Mongolia, freedom of religion is guaranteed by the new Constitution of 1992,[17] and religion and religious institutions are separated from the state.[18] While Buddhism has the largest number of followers at present, Mongolian shamanism, Christianity, and Islam (among the Kazakhs) remain minority religions.[19]

The present Buddhist revival receives support from the government as well as from the majority of the inhabitants as an authentic movement of the Mongolian people. In spite of enormous economic and social problems following the withdrawal of the Russians in 1991 (Bruun and Odgaard 1996), the rebuilding of Buddhist sites was started both by city-dwellers in Ulaanbaatar and by nomads in the countryside. In 1996 there were some 2,000 Buddhist monks in Mongolia (Barkmann 1997) and more than 155 registered monasteries and temples.[20] According to information gathered by Gandantegchenlin Monastery up till 1998, there were 3,000 monks and 200 temples in the country.[21] Approximately thirty temples have been built in the capital and *aimag* centers, while the others are in the *sums*, i.e. in the countryside.

Religious Institutions

As in the pre-revolutionary period, Buddhism in Mongolia today is decentralized. The Council for Religious Affairs is only an advisory body under the President. After the presidential election in 1997, it stopped its activities. Thus today there is no institution to regulate Buddhist affairs. This function has unofficially been taken over by the largest monastery in Mongolia, Gandantegchenlin Khiid, founded in 1838 by the Fourth Bogdo Gegen. This monastery was not destroyed in the 1930s and later served as a showcase of religious freedom during the Communist times.[22]

The large Gandantegchenlin Khiid is run like Tibetan religious institutions among exiled Tibetans in India. The monastery's leader, the *khambo lama*, presently Choizhamts, governs the monastery with the help of a council. Recently, new colleges have been established, the Kalachakra datsan, and the Dashchoimbol datsan. An enormous statue of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara was installed in the Maitreya temple in 1996. Organized as branches of Gandantegchenlin, secondary schools have been started: Gungaachoilin, Idgaachoinzlen, Geser Sümiyn, Zurkhai (the astrological college), and Manbyn (the medical college). At Gandantegchenlin the present rebuilding of Buddhist sites is registered, and some financial support is given for the reconstruction of local monasteries and temples. Teachers are sent from Gandantegchenlin to some local monasteries. In 1998 the total number of monks in the monastery was over three hundred. While a large part of the monastic population in the early 1990s consisted of old monks from the pre-communist era, young monks predominate today.[23]

Gandantegchenlin is seen by many as the head monastery in Mongolia, to which smaller monasteries and temples are affiliated.[24] This leading role of

Gandantegchenlin is not formalized, and the degree to which monasteries of other orders acknowledge Gandantegchenlin in this position remains to be documented. Some young monks from monasteries in the countryside, such as Shankh Khiid near Kharkhorin, are sent to Gandantegchenlin to receive a proper monastic education. Individual and institutional poverty, however, make it difficult to send countryside monks to the capital for studies.[25]

Since 1990 the usual way of establishing or rebuilding a temple or monastery has been as follows. Elderly local monks or ex-monks take the initiative and discuss with their compatriots the necessity for starting religious services. Then a *ger* is erected as a temple for religious meetings and the chanting of prayers, and gradually the local community collects money to build a new temple or rebuild an old one.[26] Donations are also given from other monasteries, e.g., from Gandantegchenlin. For the restoration of historic temples, the Mongolian government gives support. Monasteries also receive donations from foreign organizations, religious groups, or individuals abroad, e.g., exiled Tibetan, Japanese, Korean, or Western Buddhists. Most of the newly restored monasteries face economic problems, and without rich donors, or at least steady donations, monasteries cannot function. But even with the present poverty in Mongolia, the rebuilding of Buddhist institutions is an ongoing process, and the number of devotees seems to be increasing year by year.

The Internal Organization of Monasteries

The present internal organization of Buddhist institutions varies greatly. In some monasteries and nunneries, unlike Gandantegchenlin, we find lay participation in the management. Thus lay managers run Lamrim Datsan, Dara-ekhiyn Süm, Dechin Choinkhorlin, Togs Bayasgalant and Erdeni Zuu monasteries. This is in contrast with traditional Buddhism, which is characterized by a sharp division into monks and nuns on the one hand, and lay-people on the other. The exposure to Communism during the Soviet times has transformed the remnants of Mongolian Buddhism so as to make the differences between monastics and laity less distinct. The Buddhist ecclesiastic structure was destroyed and in the present post-Communist situation, lay-people attempt to fill the vacuum in the absence of the traditional religious leadership. The degree to which lay involvement will continue in internal monastic affairs will depend on whether a more canonical Buddhism is introduced, or whether Mongolian Buddhism is allowed to develop according to the needs of modern society.[27]

In 1934 [27.12.1934] the Mongolian Communist government, in order to secularize monks, issued a law allowing them to get married. The law was abolished in 1994 [14.01.1994], but by that time Mongolian monks, even those of the Gelugpa order, and in sharp contrast to the monastic rules (the Vinaya), had become used to married life. Although this practice meets with criticism from Tibetan and Western Buddhists, it is regarded by many Mongols as a distinctive Mongolian feature of Buddhism. Knowledge of the canonical monastic rules is at present weak both among Mongolian monks and nuns and among the laity. The monks also have difficulty in keeping the monastic vows because there is not enough room for them in the monasteries.[28] In the past monks used to live in *ger* surrounding monasteries, and elderly monks taught and took care of the young novices. Today, although there are still old men in Buddhist robes, the ones with genuine Buddhist learning are quickly vanishing. Houses or tents for monks are built only after the completion of most of the other buildings in a monastic complex. Living in the modern city of Ulaanbaatar poses several problems for traditional monastic living. Some monks disrobe after a short time in the monastery, while others stay in robes, but get married or cohabit with women. Being a monk in Mongolia today is considered a profession, and monks receive a small salary. Monks have regulated working hours in, e.g., Gandantegchenlin and in Erdeni Zuu. Such 'employment' of nuns also occurs in some nunneries. At present, being a monk appears for many more attractive than unemployment.

Terminology for Monks and Nuns

Lam originating from the Tibetan *lama* (*bla ma*), is used in Mongolia today for clergy, instead of *toyin*, which was used to denote monks in the past. In the Tibetan context, however, *lama* does not mean 'a monk', but 'a religious teacher' (Sanskrit *guru*), while *trapa* (*grwa pa*) is the Tibetan term for 'a monk'. In Mongolia *lam* is sometimes also used for female religious specialists. They are also called *gelenmaa*[29] (possibly from the Tibetan *dge slong ma*). Sometimes the terms *khandama* for female practitioners (Tib. *mkha' 'gro ma*) and the term *chavgants* for old religious women are used.

The majority of Mongolian *lam* are not technically 'proper' monks or nuns, i.e. they have not been ordained according to, or they do not follow, the rules of the Vinaya, i.e. the canonical Buddhist monastic rules. While lay-people may take vows called *dge bsnyen* in Tibetan and commit themselves to follow some codes, there are two ordinations for clerics, that of the novice [Tib. *dge tshul (ma)*] and that of the fully ordained monk or nun [Tib. *dge slong (ma)*]. For both categories celibacy is required. Very many adult *lam* in Mongolia, however, cohabit with partners of the opposite sex. This Tibetan terminology, which has taken on a new meaning in the Mongol context, causes some confusion, and we choose to use the English terms 'monk' and 'nun', keeping in mind that many

Mongol clerics only keep lay vows, and if they have monastic ordination, they do not always follow the Vinaya.

Reincarnated Lamas in Mongolia

There were and are several thousand reincarnations in Tibetan Buddhism. A theory developed in Buddhism that reality consists of three levels of subtlety: the highest, *dharmakaya*, represents the true nature of the buddhas; the intermediate level, *sambhogakaya*, is where heavenly buddhas and bodhisattvas reside; while the lowest, *nirmanakaya*, is the reality where the historical Buddha emerged and where reincarnations, such as the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa, the Panchen Lama, and the Jebtsundambas (Javdzandamba, Jebtsundampas) of Mongolia are reborn.

Reincarnation as a principle of succession goes back to twelfth-century Tibet. It was first employed in the Karma Kagyupa tradition, and the first child recognized as a reincarnation was born in 1280. Reincarnation as a principle of succession was later taken over by the Gelugpa tradition, and it quickly spread to most religious traditions and monasteries in Tibet and to countries where Tibetan Buddhism was established, such as Mongolia.[30]A reincarnation is called *tulku* (*sprul sku*) in Tibetan and *khubilgan* in Mongolian. A *tulku* can be an emanation of one or several deities from heavenly spheres, a re-embodiment of a deceased person, or a combination of the two. Several of the high lamas in Tibetan Buddhism are recognized as double reincarnations: as emanations of deities and as re-embodiments of their predecessors. Both the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa are seen as emanations of Avalokiteshvara, while the Panchen Lama is reckoned as an emanation of Amitabha, while at the same time the three are also seen as reincarnations of their predecessors. The first Jebtsundamba in Mongolia is considered a reincarnation of the famous Tibetan master Taranatha. During the last two hundred years the idea developed that a lama could reincarnate in several bodies simultaneously, as emanations of speech, body and mind.[31]

The present revival of Buddhism in Mongolia is faced with the lack of qualified Buddhist teachers as well as high reincarnations. Today there are hardly any Mongolian reincarnated lamas (*khubilgan*), except for Gurudeva Rinpoche. He was one of the initiators of the revival of Mongolian Buddhism and has collected substantial economic support from abroad, mainly from Taiwan. Gurudeva is considered the head of the monumental Amarbayasgalant khyid, a monastic complex in Selenge district to the north of Ulaanbaatar. He has initiated the restoration of these monastic buildings and is attempting to make the monastery a living religious community, recruiting orphans from Ulaanbaatar. At present he economically and morally supports several temples and monasteries in Mongolia.[32]

Another reincarnated lama who has been active in the revival process in Mongolia is Bakula Rinpoche, originally from Ladakh in Northern India. He was the Indian ambassador to Mongolia between 1989 and the summer of 2000.[33] In 1999 he completed the building of a large monastery in the center of Ulaanbaatar named Pethub Stangey Choskhorling Monastery (dPe thub bstan rgyas chos 'khor gling).[34] He is attempting to establish a Buddhism in Mongolia closely modeled on the one traditionally found in Tibet. A Tibetan monk, Geshe Tenpa Tsewang, educated in the Tibetan exile monastery Drepung, presently teaches the young Mongolian monks resident in Bakula's monastery. One of Bakula's objectives is to reintroduce the celibate monastic tradition in Mongolia, and he has ordained a number of novices, both male and female. He has also published booklets about Buddhism in Mongolian for a wide readership.

The famous Tibetan lama, Zopa Rinpoche, was present during the official opening of Bakula Rinpoche's monastery in 1999.[35] Lama Zopa Rinpoche represents the worldwide Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), and the organization has established the FPMT Mongolia Mahayana Buddhist Center Gandan Do Ngag Shedrup Ling in Ulaanbaatar. From 2001 the Center has been headed by the Australian monk Thubten Gyatso, who says that they mainly focus on teaching Buddhism to the Mongolian laity. About eighty people come every Saturday and Sunday to classes taught on Buddhism in the Center.[36] Thubten Gyatso also visits jails to talk about Buddhism, and he writes a weekly article on Buddhism for the *Mongol Messenger.* Helped by Richard Gere, the FPMT broadcasts an introductory course on Buddhism every other week on television.

There are also other Tibetan lamas visiting Mongolia from abroad, such as the Tibetan reincarnation Panchen Otrul Rinpoche, who has been asked by the Dalai Lama to promote Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia. He comes yearly to Mongolia,[37] arriving for the first time in 1995. Previously Panchen Otrul had a monastery in Eastern Tibet where his teacher was a Mongol. Panchen Otrul thinks Buddhists have much to learn about social work from the Christian tradition. When in Mongolia, he travels to remote nomad areas, to hospitals, prisons, and youth-camps to teach Buddhism.

The Dalai Lama has visited Mongolia six times between 1978 and 2002,[38] and the religious meetings arranged during his visits have been attended by a large number of Mongols. The Dalai Lama is regarded as an enormous inspiration for the revitalization of Buddhism, and he has also visited the Russian republics of Buryatia, Tuva, and Kalmykia where Tibetan Buddhism is also presently revitalizing. The Dalai Lama was invited to Mongolia in 2000, but was prohibited from flying over Chinese territory, and eventually the visit was cancelled.

The Ninth Bogdo Gegen, a Tibetan, was found by the Tibetans in 1932, but his recognition was kept a secret. He presently resides in the exile Tibetan community in Dharamsala in India (Barkmann 1997: 75). Since 1990 the Foundation of the Jebtsundamba has invited him to Mongolia. He finally visited in the summer of 1999, when he was enthusiastically received by devotees. He visited all the monasteries in Ulaanbaatar and many in the countryside. In Kharkhorin, a number of religious leaders jointly honored him with a seal symbolically making him the head of Mongolian Buddhism. His visit to Mongolia was, however, politically delicate. His close association with the Tibetan exile community and the Dalai Lama is perceived as a threat to the present political leadership and to Mongol–Chinese relations.[39] Thus following his visit and due to the sensitive political situation, the Ninth Bogdo Gegen was declared unwelcome in Mongolia.

The Tibet Foundation has since the early 1990s carried out a special program supporting Buddhism in Mongolia. The Foundation, which is based in London, has the Dalai Lama as its patron and is directed by Phuntsog Wangyal. The organization actively supports the rebuilding of Buddhism in Mongolia in number of ways: by funding and maintaining monasteries and nunneries, by sending Mongolian monks and nuns to India for studies, by bringing Tibetan teachers to Mongolia, by supplying the clergy with scriptures, by translating and publishing Buddhist texts, by developing Tibetan studies at the Mongolian National University and by supporting Buddhist events such as art exhibitions.[40]

Buddhism and National Identity

One of the reasons why Buddhism has revived so vigorously in Mongolia is that the Mongols conceive of Buddhism as the core of their national culture. Thus Buddhism is an important factor in reformulating and rebuilding Mongolian identity. Buddhism is today the only ideology that unites the Mongolian people, specifically the Khalkha tribe in Mongolia, the Buryats in Siberia (see Vanchikova, this volume), and the Kalmyks in the Volga region.

The revival of Buddhism is also an issue of governmental concern. Several laws and regulations have been issued by the government in order to establish special relations with Buddhist institutions and to support the Buddhist revival. The Edict of the President of Mongolia issued in April of 1997 facilitates the process of handing over for religious use sites owned by the state, if they were important Buddhist institutions in the past. With such support, one temple in the Erdeni Zuu monastic complex has again started to function as a religious institution. Every year the government supports one Buddhist event, either institutionally or economically or both, and in 1996 the big statue of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara was installed in the Maitreya temple in Gandantegchenlin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar.

During the New Year celebrations in 2001 both the President, Bagabandi, and the Prime Minister, Enkhbayar, from the Mongolian Revolutionary Party, visited Gandantegchenlin Monastery and participated in the *mandala* offering for the prosperity of the state, an event of great significance in a Buddhist context (Dagyab 1995: 81). A powerful symbolic expression of the relationship between the state and Buddhism could then be observed when the President and his wife, dressed in traditional golden brocade robes, reminiscent of imperial times, were accompanied by the ceremonially clad abbot of the Gandantegchenlin Monastery to the Maitreya temple. Evidently the post-communist government presently in power in Mongolia recognizes Buddhism as a pillar of Mongol national identity.

One of the problems connected with Buddhism and national identity is the language of the liturgy. As the number of qualified Buddhist teachers in Mongolia is very small, monks are sent to Tibetan monasteries in India to get a proper education. Mastering the Tibetan language is necessary in order to go through this training. Lay Mongolian Buddhists in the Association of Buddhist Lay Believers (Mongolyn Burkhany Shashiny Süsegtniy Kholboo) have expressed their wish to learn more about Buddhism. In order to do so, however, they propose to have the liturgy recited in Mongolian.[41] They are also attempting to give Buddhism in Mongolia a more national character and plan radio broadcasting of prayers in Mongolian.

An interesting element is the growth of the Chinggis Khan cult and its association with Buddhism. Chinggis Khan was recognized by Mongolian Buddhists as the reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Vajrapani.[42] The cult was expanded and Chinggis Khan was worshipped as a *chakravartin,* the Buddhist universal ruler. This Buddhist cult has recently been revived together with the cult of Chinggis Khan in general. Chinggis Khan reminds the Mongols of their glorious past when they ruled the greater part of Asia and a part of Europe. Today the cult is actively used to strengthen the Mongolian national identity and is, according to a recent analysis of nationalism in post-socialist Mongolia by Undarya Tumursukh, explicitly used by those who maintain a pan-Mongolist vision.[43]

Although Buddhism constituted the dominant cultural force in Mongolia for close on seven hundred years, surprisingly little scholarly attention has been focused on its role in forming the new Mongolian state.[45] In *Nationalism and Hybridity in Mongolia* (1998) Uradyn E. Bulag discusses the use of Buddhism in the process of choosing national symbols for the new state. Bulag emphasizes the complexity whereby traditional religious symbols, e.g., the Buddhist lotus and the Soyombo, are used by different political groups in their struggles for power (Bulag 1998: 238). The near future will show how the new post-communist government, formed in the fall of 2000, will participate in the Buddhist revival. The Prime Minister Enkhbayar is a devout Buddhist who promises to support Buddhist activity, but others, who are communist hard-liners or New Christians may influence the state's religious policies in other directions.

Nunneries

There are three other characteristic features of the revitalization of Buddhism in Mongolia today. The first is the establishment of religious orders that were suppressed in Mongolia even before the Soviet Communist regime. The second is the establishment of religious institutions for women. The third is the re-emergence of non-sectarian religious practices, such as the *lujin* (Tib. *lus sbyin* or *gcod*), where women play prominent roles.[46] The first two developments are institutional. The first represents a continuation of old religious practices, while the establishment of nunneries is most likely a novel phenomenon, and will be discussed in more detail here. The present popularity of the non-sectarian *lujin* is an old tradition presently gaining wide popularity in Ulaanbaatar as well as in the countryside.

The Buddhist monastic order has been open to women since the time of the Buddha, but the order of nuns never had similar economic, social or cultural conditions to the male order, and disappeared from the Indian sub-continent several centuries earlier than did the order of monks (Falk 1980). The full ordination of nuns has been broken in the Theravada tradition, but survived in some Mahayana countries. It is debated whether the ordination lineage for women was brought to Tibet.[47] In any case, it did not survive, and women adhering to Tibetan Buddhism can only aspire to the noviciate.[48] There has hardly been any research on women in Mongolian Buddhism, and there are no descriptions of nunneries or nuns in, e.g., Aleksei Pozdneyev's (1887; 1978) encompassing work on Buddhism in late nineteenth century Mongolia. Neither do we have any information about the ordination of women in pre-Communist Mongolia. According to Bakula Rinpoche, not even the ordination of novice nuns was established there.[49] The Manchus introduced a law which forbade women, especially virgins, to take religious vows.[50] In the past, religiously inclined women did, however, take lay vows (Tib. *dge bsnyen*), they dressed in the colors of the Buddhist order, and lived like 'nuns'.[51] Presently there are old Mongol women with shorn heads wearing robes in monastic colors, equivalent to the *gencho* (*rgan chos*) in Tibet, i.e., old religious practitioners. In Tibet these *gencho* were regarded as inferior to nuns who had taken 'proper' ordination while young. In Mongolia these old religious women are considered as pious laywomen.

Thus the ordination of nuns and the establishment of nunneries in Ulaanbaatar today seem to be new phenomena, but more research needs to be done on the ordination of monastics before the 1920s. Bakula Rinpoche has encouraged the ordination of nuns since 1990, and he has ordained a number of young women, some of whom have been sent to India for training. Like many of the monks, most female religious specialists in nunneries in Mongolia today are technically laywomen. They have taken some lay vows (*dge bsnyen*), they keep their hair long, but wear Mongolian Buddhist robes during ritual services. Those ordained as novices (Tib. *dge tshul ma*) keep their heads shorn and often wear robes in Tibetan fashion. In the three nunneries in Ulaanbaatar there are only a few novices, while the majority are 'lay-nuns'.[51]

In Ulaanbaatar we could observe three nunneries in 1998: the Narkhajidyn Süm,[52] the Tögs Bayasgalant Süm, and the Dara-ekhiyn Süm. The first two are situated close to the center of the capital, while the Dara-ekhyin Süm is in an eastern suburb. The sectarian affiliation of these nunneries is not clear. In Narkhajidyn Süm non-sectarian rituals, such as *lujin*, are performed. While some nuns were not quite sure whether their temple belonged to the Gelugpa or the Nyingmapa tradition, other stated vaguely that it belonged to the 'Red Tradition'. The Tögs Bayasgalant nunnery appears to be Gelugpa. The patron lamas of the nunnery follow the Gelugpa tradition,[53] but the nuns will, if requested, perform rituals that the Mongols generally connect with the 'Red Tradition'.

The majority of the nuns in Ulaanbaatar are young women and they come from the city, but the nunneries also recruit nomad girls. These nunneries function like religious schools where girls are taught different religious subjects, recite prayers and perform Buddhist rituals. In addition, lay subjects like mathematics, physics, Mongolian and English classes are given so as to offer a full education in the nunnery. The rituals are performed on behalf of the community, and a relatively large number of lay devotees are present during daily prayers. Both the Tögs Bayasgalant and the Dara-ekhiyn Süm were founded by and are managed by educated laywomen. Dara-ekhiyn nunnery differs from the others as it recruits its members from broken families and among street-children.[54]

After the collapse of the Soviet system in the early 1990s, the new Mongolian state has had enormous economic problems and most sectors, among them public education, suffer from lack of resources. Many of the men who lost their jobs took to drinking and this severely affected their families. Thus, in these times of high unemployment, the Buddhist male monasteries play an important role in offering job opportunities. The monasteries also educate young boys and men. The incentives to enroll in monastic-based education for women are complex. Not only is it an innovation to establish nunneries in Mongolia, but the form these institutions take, a kind of 'half-monastery', is a response to modernity and the need for a combined spiritual and secular education. Barbara Skapa and Ann. F. Benwell (1996) write that during the Soviet time, the education of women increased dramatically; 76 per cent were literate in 1969. By 1989 the reported literacy was 86 per cent for both men and women. It is maintained that over 96 per cent of women in Mongolia could read and write by the early 1990s, and that women constituted 75 per cent of the enrollment at college level.[55] When the Soviet system broke down, women suffered when maternity allowances and child-care were abolished. Many lost their jobs and opportunities for education (Bulag 1998: ch. 5; 158), and women and children were the first to become street-beggars and prostitutes. It has been maintained that around 12 per cent of the households in rural areas are headed by single women, and that about 25 per cent of poor families are headed by single mothers.[56]

Faced with bleak prospects for the future, young women, exposed to ideas of gender equality, have therefore started to enroll in monastic institutions and religious schools, not only to satisfy their spiritual needs, but also their wish for both a secular and a religious education. Several middle-aged female *lujin*-practitioners, now pensioned from their jobs as nurses, doctors and teachers, have stated that they wished for their children a combined religious and modern education.[57] In many cultures, women are the ones responsible for the upbringing of the new generation, and are often more culturally conservative than men. Their high literacy and understanding of the modern world, as well as their commitment to tradition, seem to make them want the best of both worlds.

Conclusion

There are several options open for those involved in revitalizing Buddhism in Mongolia at present. One is to establish a mainstream Tibetan Buddhist Gelugpa tradition, as seems to be the interest of some Tibetan and Western Gelugpa missionaries in Mongolia. It is also possible that a more secularized and adapted form of 'lay Buddhism' will develop, reminiscent of forms we find in the West and exemplified by the Dharma centers. A third possibility is that Buddhism in Mongolia will re-establish and develop further characteristics of its own, combining adaptation to modernity, while retaining what is believed to be traditional Mongolian Buddhism. We could find numerous examples of this dual process. The efforts to rebuild Mongolian Buddhism continue traditions from the past, and the Gelugpa order, the school of Tibetan Buddhism dominating in Mongolia in the twentieth century, is the main tradition revived today. There are, however, also attempts to re-establish the Sakyapa tradition (e.g., Erdeni Zuu) and the Nyingmapa tradition (e.g., Dechin Choinkhorlin, Namdak Terchen Ling and Narkhajidyn Süm). The non-sectarian *lujin*, which was practised in the past in Mongolia, has been revived in some monasteries. This system of teachings, and the rituals associated with it, are also adhered to and practised by individual specialists, often women.

Since 1990, new elements have been incorporated that were not present earlier in Mongolian Buddhism, e.g., the establishment of nunneries, the involvement of monks and nuns in social welfare, and the lay involvement in the leadership of the monasteries. The combination of the modern and indigenous elements is also evident in the present emphasis on both secular and religious education, often combined in the monasteries, the apparent relaxed attitudes to the canonical monastic rules hard to enforce in a modern society, and the sometimes reluctant attitude towards introducing Tibetan 'orthodox' monastic culture. The present emphasis on translating books on Buddhism into modern Mongolian is strongly supported by religious leaders,[58] while in the past Tibetan was the clerical language.[59] The great variety of institutional forms and ascetic practices we can observe in Mongolia today, as well as the present openness to both genders, signify an inclusive and manifold religion which may be a strategy to resist secularization and the threat posed by the present zealous Christian proselytism[60] – and at the same time an attempt to strengthen a Mongolian religious and national identity after years of foreign dominance.

Authors' Note

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There are striking similarities between an article by Karenina Kollmar-Paulenz ('Buddhism in Mongolia after 1990', *Journal of Global Buddhism*, 4 (2003), pp. 18–34) and our essay. Our research was based on field trips made in 1997, 1998 and 2001 and the results were presented orally at several conferences (in 1999 – International Seminar *Revival of Buddhism in Mongolia after 1990*, Warsaw; in 2000 – Central Eurasian Conference, Bloomington; in 2001 – XXVIII. Deutscher Orientalistentag, Bamberg; in 2003 – Xth International Seminar on Tibetan Studies, Oxford), and an unpublished version of our paper was well known to colleagues.

A note on transcription: Tibetan words are written according to the transcription of T. Wylie. Sanskrit names are given in simplified English transcription (long vowels and other diacritics are not marked). Words in Classical Mongolian are transcribed according to the international standard. Modern Mongolian words are transcribed from Cyrillic script. The main problems are posed by Mongolized Tibetan names which are written differently by different authors in the Khalkha language, i.e. Gandantegchenlin and Gandan Tegchin Ling etc. We decided to follow the spelling used by the monasteries themselves (i.e. Gandantegchenlin).

Notes

1 We observed such activity in the Shankh Khiid and the Amarbayasgalant Khiid in 1998. The same was reported by R. Byaamba in March 2001. See also *Mandala* Jan.-Feb. 2000 where Margery Cross writes that during Panchen Otrul's visit in the countryside, 'People produce old texts, hidden for generations, for Rinpoche's scrutiny.'

2 According to one estimate, about fifty per cent of the male monastic population in Ulaanbaatar originates from Dund Gobi. This needs, however, to be documented.

3 See e.g. Robertson 1992, Beyer 1994 and Berger 1999.

4 For Buddhism in Mongolia, see Pozdneyev (1887) 1978, Bawden 1961, Moses 1977, Sagaster 1989 and Berger and Bartholomew 1995.

5 Mong. *ulagan shashin.* What is meant by the 'Red Tradition' (more precisely 'Red Teaching' or 'Red Religion') is ambiguous. It often refers to the unreformed rNying ma pa order, while at other times it is used as a term to cover the rNying ma pa, the bKa' brgyud pa and the Sa skya pa traditions as opposed to the dGe lugs pa, often also called *sharyn shashin* - the 'Yellow Tradition.' With regard to Ligden Khan, however, it concerns bKa' brgyud pa tradition.

6 Damdinsüren and Tsend 1976, pp. 180–182, Norbo 1999, esp. pp. 13–18.

7 See Shagdarsüren, 'Die traditionelle mongolische Medizin' and Bawden, 'Divination.' In Heissig 1989: 227–231 and 272–273.

8 See Bartholomew, 'An Introduction to the Art of Mongolia' . In Berger and Bartholomew 1996: 76–87.

9 Even today such names are very popular. Among 1390 Mongolian names analyzed in a name dictionary, 467 (or one third) were of Tibetan origin. See Serzhee 1991.

10 Bira 1970; Damdinsüren and Tsend 1976, pp. 579–627.

11 Ta ra na tha Kun dga' snying po, an eminent master of the Jo nang pa tradition.

12 See for example a short article by Gyorgy Somlai 1988.

13 Maiskii 1959: 247. He states, however, that only one third of the monks used to stay in monasteries, while the others went back to the steppes and led a lay life.

14 Baabar's *Twentieth Century Mongolia* (1999) is mainly based on Mongolian history written by foreigners, and he is at times tendentious and nationalistic in his approach. There should be no doubt, however, that the massive killings of Mongolian clergy took place, and only since the 1990s have the Mongols had the opportunity to openly discuss and come to terms with this tragic religious persecution.

15 Interview with an old monk in Kharkhorin, in August 1998.

16 Religious practices and the enrollment of a small number of monks at Gandantegchenlin in Ulaanbaatar was allowed again since the 1940s under close surveillance by the government.

17 *Mongol Ulsyn Ündsen Khuul'* (Mongolian Constitution), Ulaanbaatar, 1992: 9.

18 Ibid.: 5.

19 According to one statistical survey in Ulaanbaatar, in 1996, among 1800 citizens in one of Ulaanbaatar's districts, 71.1 per cent were reported to be religious. Among them, 79.5 per cent declared themselves as Buddhists, 11.6 per cent as Muslims, 3.8 per cent as Christians, 2.7 per cent as members of Ananda Marga, 2 per cent as shamanists, and 0.2 per cent as belonging to Bahai. See Bataa Davaasambuugiyn 1998, p. 61.

20 'Odoogoor sergesen süm Khiidiyn zhagsaalt' In *Lavain egshig*, Gandan Tegchenlin *Khiid*, 1996, No 1, pp. 62–64.

21 Interview with the monastery officials, August 1998.

22 See also Baabar 1999, pp. 399–402.

23 This observation is supported by Mongolian research from 1997, which documents that c. fifty per cent of the monks were younger than sixty years old. See Bataa Davaasambuugiyn 1998, p. 58. This tendency appears to be growing.

24 This is maintained by leaders of Erdeni Zuu in Kharkhorin and of the nearby Shankh *Khiid* who stated that the abbot of Gandantegchenlin is the head abbot of all monasteries in Mongolia. Both Erdeni Zuu and Shankh Khiid belong to the Gelugpa order, while Erdeni Zuu also maintains close contact with exile Tibetan Sakya monasteries. Interview, August 1998.

25 Interview with the head monk at the Shankh Khiid, August 1998.

26 This is how, e.g., Shankh Khiid, Namdak Terchen Ling, Dechin Choinkhorlin, Narkhazhidyn Süm, Dara-ekhiyn Süm were established. In February 2001 we visited Tagarva's temple Urzhin Shadulin under construction in Ulaanbaatar. A provisional *ger* for communal rituals was placed inside a half-finished brick construction of a temple.

27 In Sri Lanka the breakdown of the traditional distinction between members of the *sangha* and the laity was a prevalent feature of the form of Buddhism that developed on the island from the latter half of the nineteenth century. This new form of Buddhism, named Protestant Buddhism by Gombrich and Obeyesekere, was heavily influenced by colonial rule, orientalism and protestant Christianity. See Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988, pp. 202–241 (ch. 6).

28 Only Bakula Rinpoche's monastery has living-quarters for all the monks within the monastic compound.

29 See for example Bawden 1997, p. 108.

30 The other principle of clerical succession was biological; non-celibate lamas were succeeded by their sons, or celibate uncles were followed by their nephews. In some cases the two principles of succession were combined, as e.g. in the Sakya order. Succession by reincarnation seems to have developed in schools where a dominant family did not have vested interests in keeping the clerical positions in their family. It is possible that the idea of reincarnation goes back to the 'Eighty-four Great Magicians' (*mahasiddhas*) of India, see Snellgrove and Richardson (1968)1980, pp. 136–37.

31 This practice seems first to have developed in the Drigung Kagyu ('Bri khung bKa' brgyud) school (Snellgrove and Richardson (1968)1980, p. 137).

32 E.g. the Tögs Bayasgalant Nunnery.

33 Interview with Bakula Rinpoche, August 1998. See also Kunsang, 'The Reawakening of Buddhadharma in Mongolia,' in *Mandala*, Jan.-Feb. 2000: 1.

34 His monastery in Ladakh, just outside Leh, is also called Pethub.

35 Interview with Thubten Gyatso, FPMT Mongolia Mahayana Buddhist Center Gandan Do Ngag Shedrup Ling, March 2001. See also *Mandala* Nov.-Dec. 2000: 11 and 19 and *Mandala* Jan.-Feb. 2000.

36 Translated into Mongolian.

37 An interview with Panchen Otrul, August 1998.

38 In 1978, 1982, 1992, 1994, 1995 and 2002.

39 Interview with Bayantsagaan, February 2001.

40 E.g. their support of the exhibition arranged by the Mongolian Institute of Buddhist Art in 2000. See *Newsletter of Tibet Foundation*, no. 30, pp. 16–17, 20–21, no. 31, pp. 18–21, no. 32, pp. 19–20.

41 An interview with Mr. Choimaa, the president of the association, August 1997.

42 See Sagaster 1976, p. 256. Abadai Khan in the sixteenth century and Gushri Khan in the seventeenth century were recognized as Vajrapani's reincarnations. In the nineteenth century chronicles, like the *Erdeni-yin erike*, Chinggis Khan was regarded as the incarnation of the Bodhisattva Vajrapani.

43 Tumursukh (unpublished paper of 2000) identifies three Mongolian nationalist visions: pan-Mongolism, conservative/xenophobic nationalism and civic-oriented nationalism.

44 With the exception of Campi 1991. E.g., Tumursukh does not include Buddhism as an important factor in her discussion of Mongolian nationalism, ibid.

45 *Lujin* practice in Mongolia will be analysed by Bareja-Starzynska and Havnevik, forthcoming.

46 There are references to fully ordained nuns among the Tibetan-speaking peoples of Eastern Tibet well into the fourteenth century (Tashi Tsering, personal communication) and Diemberger writes that the First rDo rje Phag mo was a fully ordained nun (Tib. *dge slong ma*), see Diemberger forthcoming.

47 Western women and some Tibetan women have taken the full ordination from Chinese lineages. Havnevik op.cit.

48 Interview, August 1998.

49 The authors thank V.L. Uspensky for this information. See legal code of the Manchu Qing Empire the *Lifanyuan zeli*, the Russian translation from Manchu by S. Lipovtsov, *Ulozheniye Kitaiskoi Palaty vneshnikh snoshenii*, vol. 2, Sankt Petersburg, 1828, p. 220, 225.

50 One who takes lay or *dge bsnyen* vows in Mongolia is called *ubashi* or *ubasantsa*, see Pozdneyev (1887) 1978: 202, 685. Bulag writes that before the revolution in Mongolia, apart from monks, lay men and women over 50 or 60 often shaved their heads and took religious vows. Well into the 1970s, older men and women in Ordos shaved their heads and took little interest in mundane life (1988: 123).

51 Sue Byrne writes that in 1995 there were 30 women with *dge tsul* vows in Ulaanbaatar, while in 2000 the number had decreased to a handful, *Tibet Foundation Newsletter*, no. 31: 20–21.

52 There were 30 'nuns' here in 1998, five of whom had been ordained novices (Tib. *dge tsul ma*).

53 See video-documentation by Allione 1995 and Kahlen 1994/5.

54 In 1998 there were 21 young 'nuns', four of whom had received the novice ordination (Tib. *dge tsul*). The nunnery has foreign donors and fifteen young nuns were in a Korean Buddhist monastery undertaking computer-training. Interview with Badamkhand, August 1998, March 2001.

55 Skapa and Benwell 1996: 137, 145. See also Tumursukh, op. cit.

56 Ibid.: 140. Reliable statistics are hard to find, and we lack reliable information about, e.g., the percentage of single-mother households during the Communist era.

57 Interviews in Namdak Terchen Ling, March 2001.

58 There are many examples of such new translations. The translation of several booklets into Mongolian was financed by Bakula Rinpoche. R. Byamba translated and published the Dalai Lama's Kalachakra teachings (in the *Lavain egshig*, no 1, 1997) into Mongolian. Lama Zopa Rinpoche sponsored the translation of fourteen books into Mongolian (*Mandala* Jan.-Feb. 2000). Tibet Foundation published several books.

59 Tibetan was adopted as the clerical language in spite of the fact that the task of translating Buddhist scriptures into Mongolian was completed in the eighteenth century.

60 According to Bataa Davaasambugiyn 1998, p. 57, among Christian churches in 1997 there were: Adventists, Baptists, Mormons, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans. There were twenty Christian churches in Ulaanbaatar and five in the countryside, and more than 50 Christian organizations. O'Donnel estimates that there were 10–20,000 converts in Mongolia in 1999. See also Bulag 1998: 36 n. 3. Kunsang writes that Christians sponsor the CNN news channel in Mongolia where the commercials are all about Christianity, and that Mongolians are paid $5 per person to attend church services (*World Tibet News*, 2000: 1).

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10

From Shamanist Healing to Scientific Medicine: Bonesetters in Inner Mongolia

Li Narangoa and Li Altanjula

In today's Inner Mongolia, members of the public who suffer from an injury or ailment can choose from three distinct medical traditions. Alongside Western and Chinese medicine, traditional Mongol medicine (*monggol emnelge*) is both recognized officially and widely used, not only by Mongols but also by Chinese residents of the autonomous region. The origins of Mongol medicine lie in traditional Mongolian religious belief, both Buddhist and shamanist, but by a complex process these medical practices have now lost much of their former religious character. Mongol medicine now stands as a form of largely secular treatment alongside two other medical systems, but the processes which led to this situation tell us much about the changing character of Mongol society.

The two distinctive elements of modern Mongol medicine are herbal medicine and bone-setting. Herbal medicine is considered to be the special province of Buddhist monks, and it relies on traditions and practices introduced to Mongolia from India by way of Tibet after the 16th century.[1] In the following centuries, especially during the 18th and 19th century Mongols developed Mongol herbal medicine distinct from Indian and Tibetan influences. Bone-setting, by contrast, has always been regarded as an indigenous skill, practiced especially by the shamans, who are heirs to the oldest religious traditions of the Mongols. Bone-setting was only part of the traditional medical repertoire of the shamans; they also used singing, music and dance to cure a wide variety of ailments caused by malevolent spirits. In modern Inner Mongolia, however, these other forms of shaman practice have been eliminated or confined to isolated rural regions, whereas bone-setting has become a respected and even profitable practice.

This chapter analyses the survival of traditional shamanic bone-setting in modern and urban contexts. It examines the bonesetters' adjustment to the processes of political, social and economical transition in Inner Mongolia and argues that the shamanic bone-setting has been distanced from its origin in shamanism so that only a 'secularized' form of bone-setting has survived in the science- and market-oriented urban society of modern Inner Mongolia. The main force in this shift has been the modern state ideology of modernity, progress and science. Shamans/bonesetters have also been influenced by this progressive and scientific ideal and have been attempting to position their healing ability in the context of modern science in order to be recognized by state institutions and the broader public in China and to adjust to the contemporary urban environment. But this process of adjusting traditional practices to fit the modern world, and the rural to the urban, has generated difficulties for Mongol bone-setting practitioners in both their practice and their identity.

The Bonesetters: Spiritual Shamans or Lay Curers?

Bone-setting as a practice (yasa barikhu) and the role of bonesetter (yasa barigchi in Mongolian) are not specific to Mongolia but are found in many cultures around the world. The common understanding about these bonesetters is that they do not require modern Western medical training to mend broken bones, but rather draw on traditional skills and practical experience. They typically manipulate the broken bones and massage the surrounding muscles to restore everything to its proper place and to promote strong natural setting. In this respect, bone-setting has been a fairly common practice amongst people involved in traditional fighting sports such as karate in Japan, wushu in China, taekwondo in Korea and wrestling in Mongolia. Most traditional sport instructors possess some bone-setting techniques acquired from their long experience of dealing with injuries such as broken bones and muscle strain.

Apart from this bone-setting skill based on practical experience there is, however, another type of bone-setting practice found in various cultures, one that is based on supernatural powers that the bonesetter inherits from a shaman ancestor. Whereas the former focuses on learning and experience, the latter emphasizes the mystical ability transmitted by the shaman to the bonesetter via dreams or other shamanic rituals. The characteristic practice of the Mongol shamans was to blow distilled alcohol from the mouth on to the injury and to stroke the affected place a few times. There was virtually no massage and no use of other medicines or dressings. Sometimes, however, the shaman would use a mirror or metal balls to draw heat from the wound. From the shaman's point of view these actions drove out malevolent spirits that were preventing the body from restoring its own wholeness. The shaman healing ritual was quicker than the massage and manipulation of the lay healer, and was reputed to heal much more rapidly. Mongol bone-setting is seen as part of shamanic healing because the best bonesetters, especially those from the eastern part of Inner Mongolia, have all been descendents of a powerful female shaman, Naran Abai (1790–1875), from the Khorchin (Horchin, Qorchin) region of the eastern part of Inner Mongolia. Legend says that she was descended from the shaman Khubughtai who was the founder of shamanism in this region and was the younger brother of the shaman Küköchü (Teb Tenggeri) who served Chinggis Khan.[2] Naran Abai inherited the traditional shamanic healing rituals that had been practiced by her ancestors and developed them further. Her abilities were then inherited by her son and grandson.

Today, her bone-setting practice is continued by her great-grandson, Bao Jinshan and his son, Bao Zhanhung. In other words, the bone-setting developed by Naran Abai has now passed on to the fourth and fifth generations (Bao, 2001). Until the third generation, Naran Abai's descendents were all recognized as powerful shamans and their healing power was passed on to the next generations via dreams or special shaman rituals, such as blood drinking. The best-known case of this kind during the twentieth century happened to Sekelejab, one of the most prominent bonesetters in Inner Mongolia He was the son of Naran Abai's great-granddaughter, and inherited his bone-setting ability from his maternal uncle, the great-grandson of Naran Abai, who was a well respected shaman. Sekelejab lost his mother in his early childhood and his uncle brought him up and took him everywhere he went. But another tragedy struck Sekelejab while he was still in his teens when his uncle passed away suddenly. Just before he took his last breath the uncle instructed Sekelejab to drink some of his blood and informed him that this would grant him the ability to heal people. This story is still told in his family, and is also widely known amongst Mongols. And indeed Sekelejab became one of the most able bonesetters in twentieth century Inner Mongolian history. As we can see, the inheritance of the Mongol shamanic healing ability was not restricted to a single paternal line, but was also passed on through maternal lines. Naran Abai's healing powers were not only passed on to her son, and from her son to his son and so on, but also through daughters. As a consequence, most of the well-known bonesetters have been from the Khorchin region and they have all been related to each other.

In Mongol culture, people do acknowledge bone-setting skills acquired from practical experience and there are bonesetters whose work is entirely based on such skills, but the Mongols have more trust in bonesetters who have inherited their abilities from shaman family members. Shamanic bone-setting, however, also requires some exercises and experience. Distinguishing between 'practice-based' bonesetters and 'shamanic- inheritance' bonesetters is not peculiar to Mongolia. Among the indigenous communities in Guatemala, for example, there are also two different groups of bonesetters – one with supernatural powers, and the other consisting of lay healers (Tax 1937, Fabrega 1973). In other words, as in Mongol culture, one group of bonesetters obtained their knowledge or power from their family via inheritance and mystical transmission, while the other group obtained their knowledge from practical experience, as traditional sports experts do. In general, the former are considered much more powerful and 'professional' than the latter. Mongols believe that the best bonesetters possess supernatural power. In other words, bonesetters were shamans who 'specialized' in bone-setting.[3] Even today, in a modern, urban society, and even though bone-setting is no longer part of a broader shamanic practice, Mongols still believe that bonesetters who inherit their power from their shaman ancestors are the best.

However, despite the persistence of a degree of faith in shamanic healing powers, people's perceptions of bone-setting and the centrality of shamanism to these perceptions have been shifting. Earlier, people talked about a powerful shaman, but now people more often refer to good bonesetters – even though they are still more likely to trust those who inherited their ability from shaman ancestors. Earlier the focus was more on the shamans who had healing power and set broken or dislocated bones; now the focus is more on powerful bonesetters rather than powerful shamans. The descendants of the powerful female shaman Naran Abai were revered as shamans down to the third generation. However, from the fourth generation – since the middle of the twentieth century – they have not been considered shamans, or at least have hidden their shaman identity and calling them 'shamans' has not been 'politically correct'. Bonesetters may still believe that their father or uncle or aunt inherited supernatural power via dreams or some other mystical form of inheritance from powerful shaman ancestors. Often, however, they avoid talking about their own 'inheritance' of supernatural powers. This is partly because to do so would deny the scientific nature of their skill, and partly because shamanism is not yet fully accepted within the political environment of Inner Mongolia. Bone-setting is undergoing a transition from its roots in and reliance on shamanism to the status of a modern – if not Western – medical practice grounded in science and experience.

Scientific Medicine and a Healthy Nation

In present day Inner Mongolia, hospitals may offer all three forms of medical treatment – Western, Chinese and traditional Mongol – in different departments of the same facility, and patients can choose which type of healing they receive. However, the path to this combined system has not been a very easy one. As with most traditional/indigenous medicine throughout the world, both Chinese and Mongol medical practices have had to make a range of adjustments and adaptations to the new social and cultural realties emerging during the last century. The biggest challenge, of course, has been the emergence of Western medicine, supported by intellectuals and politicians in China and Inner Mongolia as the most advanced and efficient means to build a healthy nation.

From the late 19th century, Asian countries began to turn to western sciences for the power they provided and to defend their national honour against the West. Japan did so and China followed. Modern western medicine was introduced in order to build a strong and healthy nation. Gradually, modern Mongols as much as the Chinese and Japanese rejected traditional medicine as inefficient and superstitious. The ideology of science undermined traditional Chinese medicine, and indigenous medicine such as the Mongol healing tradition came to be seen as inferior to modern Western medicine. Especially since the early twentieth century, along with the idea of the modern nation state, there has been in Asia a strong wish to abandon the old medical practices in favour of modern Western scientific medicine (Croizier 1994: 90–92). The prestige of science is so great that practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine in Taiwan attempt to attain equal status with Western medicine by trying to prove that the traditional system is also scientific (Unschuld 1973).

Mongol medical practices were also affected by the scientifically oriented nation-building process in Mongolia in the twentieth century, which was influenced by Russia and Japan as well as China. Mongols in Outer Mongolia established the Mongolian People's Republic in 1924 and thereafter received modern western modern science and ideology, and medical practices, via the Soviet Union. Beginning in the late 1920s, Buddhist monks and shamans in Outer Mongolia were persecuted as 'feudal lords' as well as 'superstitious' religious healers. The situation in Inner Mongolia was more complicated. Surrounded by China, Soviet-dominated Outer Mongolia and Japan (then occupying Manchuria), Inner Mongolia was influenced politically as well as scientifically by its powerful neighbours. It was also trying to become independent from China and had its own notions of what the process of nation-building should entail. Intellectuals in Inner Mongolia were very much aware of public health and were keen to introduce modern western medicine and hygiene. They saw the traditional healing practices of monks and shamans as primitive. Chinese medicine, rejected by Chinese intellectuals themselves, was not a factor at the time. During the 1930s and 1940s there was a campaign for modern hygiene and medicine to build healthy Mongols for the future. Newspapers and school textbooks regularly illustrated modern hygiene and health related information. During the Japanese occupation in Manchuria and Mongolia, Japanese monks and associations were also active in setting up medical institutions which further spread western ideas of hygiene and medical knowledge (*Shinshu*, 1937, 10: 17–18). The ideology of building a scientifically oriented healthy nation was propagated among the intellectuals, but practices amongst common people were another story altogether. In the countryside of Inner Mongolia most people still relied on traditional Mongol healing. There was also scepticism and resistance among Mongol Buddhist lamas who were responsible for the herbal medicine practices of the Mongols.

In 1949, Inner Mongolia was incorporated into the People's Republic of China and since then health politics and medical practice have adjusted to the political ideology of the People's Republic. The Communist Chinese discourse emphasized Western scientific medicine, although there was also a campaign for using traditional medicine and critical voices against Western medicine branding it as 'bourgeois' from 1954. In 1958, during the Great Leap Forward, criticisms of western medicine became stronger than ever. From the 1960s the idea of combining Chinese and Western medicine was favoured by the Chinese communist regime and the idea or ideal of 'people's medicine' (*renmin yixue*) was promoted. In rural areas, the well-known 'barefoot doctor' (*chijiao yisheng*) was introduced and hygiene centres were set up (Croizier 1994: 180–204). The training of the barefoot doctors varied from 3 months to 2 years. They were part-time doctors and part-time farmers, or herders in the case of pastoral Mongolia. One third of their time was for farming or herding, another third for their medical practice and the remainder spent visiting patients at home or attending medical seminars (New and New 1977: 505–7). These barefoot doctors were supposed to combine Western and Chinese medical knowledge, but in reality they were poorly equipped with any kind of knowledge, medical or otherwise – most had no more than a junior high school education – and they had to rely on the knowledge of the local medicine men (Croizier, 1976: 351). Mongol traditional medicine men were recruited to be part of the new system and supervise the barefoot doctors. Bonesetters worked as 'physicians' in these new hygiene centres. However, they were not given the new title of 'barefoot doctors' – they were simply referred to as bonesetters. Barefoot doctors were generally young people and were seen as representing modern knowledge, whereas the bonesetters were mostly older and represented the old tradition, and thus had higher status, since western medicine was still not widely accepted by the common people. The spread of traditional Chinese medicine in Inner

Mongolia came about during this period, at the same time as Mongol medicine became part of the new medical institution. However, during the Cultural Revolution bonesetters were criticised as feudal and superstitious and not allowed to carry out their practice, and some were jailed.

Since the late 1970s, Chinese policy has gradually become more open to traditional practices and bonesetters have been allowed to return to hygiene and medical centres to continue their work. Since then, bone-setting has been recognized as part of the medical establishment, along with Mongol herbal medicine, Western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine and there are even special hospitals for bone-setting.[4] Patients are free to choose any of these practices. The patients who use the Mongol herbal medicine are mainly Mongols, whereas the patients who visit the bone-setting section are more ethnically mixed. Mongols, of course, very often use the western and/or Chinese medicines. Sometimes they shift from one to another if they realize that the first choice is not helping them. In this way a multi-cultural, tripartite medical institution has developed in Inner Mongolia, encompassing the three different medical systems of Western, traditional Chinese and traditional Mongol medicine.

Bone-setting is practiced in three different institutional forms: home-based practices, official medical institutions (e.g., hospitals) and private clinics. Working out of their own homes was the most common arrangement for bonesetters before modern medical institutions were set up. In addition to being traditional, the home-based practice had the advantage of being invisible during the period in which bonesetters and other shamanic activities were forbidden as feudal and superstitious. Treating patients in official medical institutions is a more recent practice, beginning in the 1960s when the new hygiene centres and hospitals were established. Because of the lack of medical personnel, bonesetters took up the role of physicians. The private bone-setting clinic is of very recent origin, appearing only in the 1990s as part of the free market policy that allowed medical practitioners to set up their own practices. The shift of bone-setting from the home-based practice to clinics and hospitals has been accompanied by a corresponding shift from the countryside to urban areas, especially since the late 1970s when bone-setting became part of the regular hospital setup in Inner Mongolia. A few special bone-setting hospitals were also set up, and bonesetters who had been practicing in rural areas were transferred to these institutions.

The recent acceptance of bonesetters does not mean that bone-setting is now seen as 'scientific' medicine. Most bonesetters still have hardly any medical training and are not licensed like other medical practitioners. The fact that they do not have proper training and a written license itself speaks for the 'unscientific' character of bone-setting, according to the official view. Moreover, until recently there has not been any written work on the theoretical background and empirical practice of bone-setting, which would contribute to establishing its scientific character. The modern state bureaucracy requires, however, more and more certificates and licenses from the bonesetters to guarantee that they have been trained in medical theory. This is a new challenge for the bonesetters who had been setting bones only according to traditional practices. In order to situate bone-setting as part of modern medicine, bonesetters are now working to define and articulate bone-setting within the terms of Western, Chinese and Mongol (Tibetan-Mongol) medical theory and practice.

Bone-setting on Its Way Towards the Scientific and the Urban

Bone-setting was only one part of shamanic healing practices. Apart from bone-setting, shamans had different forms of healing rituals, such as utilizing song and dance to heal many different kinds of physiological and physical illnesses. While these other forms of shamanic healing are now very seldom practiced, and many of them are about to disappear, bone-setting has become an accepted part of contemporary Mongol health care, and the bonesetters have successfully retained their practice and prestige in the move from a rural to an urban setting. One has to ask why they alone among tradition Mongol shamanic healers have succeeded in making the transition to contemporary Mongol society. Partly it is due to the simplicity and visibility of the treatment. Bone-setting is a physical treatment and there is not much ritual attached to it compared with other shamanic treatments. For example, the song and dance rituals of other shamanic healing, often involving many people and a variety of symbolic activities were not utilized by bonesetters. That means that there is no visible 'mystery' in the process. The result of the treatment – the healing of the patient – is also faster and more apparent than in other shamanic healing methods. This visibility of treatment and the successful healing results are good rejoinders to critics who claim that bone-setting is 'superstitious' or unscientific.

In addition, bonesetters have made efforts to present their practices in a modern, scientific medical context. Until recently, bonesetters did not have any explicitly formulated theory for their practices. To appease the ideology of scientific medicine, and to be recognized by the state as legitimate medical practitioners, bonesetters now try to explain what they do within the framework of modern medical theories, not only western, but also Chinese and Mongol (or Tibetan-Mongol). In other words, they have attempted to shift the practice of bone-setting from the religious context of its shamanic origins to a rational and scientific context. Bao Jinshan, the great-grandson of Naran Abai and the most influential bonesetter in present day Inner Mongolia, has attempted to explain the bone-setting technique in terms of Western, Mongol and Chinese medical theory. According to Bao, blowing alcohol onto the patient during a bone-setting treatment has a sterilizing or anesthetic function and also provides the energy to heal the patients. The former argument draws on Western medical practice, while the latter is based on Chinese Qigong theory (Bao 1997). This argument is completely different from the philosophy of shamanic healing, in which the cause of sickness is evil spirits, and treatment or healing involves getting rid of these evil spirits by worshipping or invoking ancestral spirits (Heissig 1980).

Bone-setting was not only easily associated with Qigong practices, but also with the phenomenon of *teyi gongneng* ('special ability') that was strongly supported by certain circles of Chinese intellectuals and journalists during the 1980s and 1990s. This 'special ability' referred to people with high IQs or who were born with a special ability, such as the alleged ability to read a book from behind a wall without looking at it, or children who were thought to be able to learn the contents of a book just by holding it to their ear and 'listening' to it. At times, Qigong was also considered to be a kind of *teyi gongneng*. Bonesetters were also seen as falling into this category people because they could fix bones without having any medical training. Moreover, this notion of 'special ability' was more acceptable to some Chinese cultural values than shamanism, although no more modern and rational, no less superstitious. Thus, the association of bone-setting with *teyi gongneng* provided another boost to its credibility and acceptance. Bonesetters' work as healers in the rural health centres established before and after the Cultural Revolution was an important factor in enabling bone-setting to become established as an acceptable medical practice in contemporary, urban Inner Mongolia. As discussed earlier, after Inner Mongolia was incorporated into the People's Republic China, there were insufficient medical personnel and facilities in rural areas, and so traditional medicine men, including shamanic healers and bonesetters, were used in the newly-established rural medical institutions or hygiene centres. Apart from the institutional recognition, the patients were the most important resource for the bonesetters. The most crucial factor was that patients needed and need them. In rural areas where the state healthcare system was not able to reach, bonesetters were the main source of medical treatment for many patients. They used little medicine in the conventional sense, but treated illnesses with their traditional techniques of massage, stretching, binding and so on. They were well known and respected primarily because of their skill at fixing bones, joint and tendon injuries, but they also treated other kinds of illness such as chronicle headache, chest pain and more. Mongols did not hesitate to travel hundreds of kilometers to visit a good bonesetter. The political and economic changes of the last fifty years have not made the physical injuries which bonesetters treat any less numerous. On the contrary, with the demands of a modern, urban lifestyle, injuries to muscles, joints and bones have increased substantially. In urban areas where there is high population density, there are now large numbers of patients needing the services of the bonesetters.

Conflict with the Medical Establishment: Licensing and Status

Traditional medicine conflicts with modern medicine not only in terms of its basis and authority – its appeal to tradition and ritual rather than scientific principle – but also in terms of the bureaucracy of the modern world. In the past, bonesetters did not require a license to carry out their work – what counted was the ability itself.[5] Moreover, if the bonesetters were related to the powerful shamans, nobody questioned their legitimacy as bonesetters. They did not need to have any special training in medicine. When the state medical institutions were set up they often recruited bonesetters on the basis of their ability to heal. They were tested on their ability to heal, but not on modern medical theory. As time passed, however, the institutions increasingly expected the bonesetters to possess formal qualifications. Since late 1980s bonesetters have been required to get a license to practice their healing. This is a new phenomenon for them. The license regulation became especially important in the 1990s when bonesetters were allowed to set up private clinics.

The process for getting a license as a bonesetter is still somewhat unsettled. At present, there are two ways to become licensed. One is to pass an official test in western clinical and medical theory, and the other what we might call 'licensing by individual'. In the latter case, a license is issued based on the recommendation of a well-established bonesetter who is already licensed.

The problem is, however, that most of the bonesetters do not have any real medical training, and even their general education is often very limited. Some have received hardly any formal education, while others may have studied extensively, and even gone to university. But hardly any went through modern medical studies. This raises the question whether it is fair to judge traditional healers by their familiarity with modern medical knowledge, and whether those who get licenses by passing a test on western medical theory are necessarily any more skilled at setting bones.

The actual ability of bonesetters, however, does not seem to depend on their education, nor is their social status affected by their level of formal education or the lack of a license. Some unlicensed bonesetters have successful practices. One such bonesetter learned the practice from his uncle, and despite his lack of medical education or license was widely known and trusted. In fact, he was employed by the public hospital in Ganjig (Ganjuga) where bone-setting was an important specialty.

According to the regulation, a bonesetter's license has to be renewed every year. Most of the bonesetters who have set up private practices have ignored the licensing requirement or don't bother renewing their licenses. They do not want to and are not always able to pass the test. There is always a way around the official procedure. Personal contacts (*guanxi*) play a crucial role. For example, some of their patients might be from the police or from the license office. If the patients are healed, they not only feel obliged to help the bonesetters out, but also more important they recognize the ability to heal. Where personal contacts are not adequate, petty corruption is another possibility – bribing the officials in charge. The requirement to renew licenses every year also generates income for these administration officers, though the stated aim is to control the private sector. If the bonesetters do not want or are unable to pay the fee, then they can evade it by hiding or moving around. One of our informants said that she had been helped by a patient to renew her licence without attending the exam, and sometimes she just changes her address to avoid the check.[6] In this respect, bonesetters have been adjusting to the urban social environment and utilizing the anonymity of urban culture.

Bonesetters are not only attempting to adapt to modern urban culture and scientific medical theory, but they are also trying to incorporate modern medical instruments in order to stake a claim to certain kinds of scientific prestige. Traditionally, the bonesetter used only alcohol, a mirror and metal balls in their treatment. Nowadays they may also utilize modern medical equipment, like X-ray machines. However, they do not operate such equipment themselves; rather, they cooperate with technicians who are trained in its use. The bonesetters say that they do not need this modern equipment for their treatment, that it is only used to help patients see their condition before and after the bonesetter's treatment (interview 2001). Gould observed the same attitudes and patterns in indigenous healers' encounter with modern western medicine in other parts of the world. He stated that indigenous healers 'even adopt the paraphernalia of modern medicine in order to intensify their psychological impact on their patients. . . . The routinized impersonality now so intrinsically a component of the modern professional role probably intensifies and helps promote the consolidation of this defensive reaction' (1965: 277–8). Bonesetters are in competition for patients, in treating patients with the modern western medicine although bonesetters specialize in treating broken or dislocated bones and they have confidence that they have something to contribute and to show in this area. But they are in a weak position in terms of official recognition and status. Therefore, they defensively adopt some of the paraphernalia of modern medicine to give their patients some 'visible' proof of healing and to facilitate official recognition of their services, but they do not make claims to the theoretical knowledge of a western medical physician.

In the past, shamanic bone-setting was explicitly magical. The forces which healed as a result of the shamans' work were spiritual rather than physical. The actual healing ceremony was not accompanied by other characteristic shamanic rituals such as song and trance, but the bone-setting was carried out by people who were known to be spiritually powerful. Today, by contrast, the healing method is emphasized and presented as scientific, and the spiritual aspect is weakened, if not ignored completely.

Nonetheless, the reputation of bonesetters does not depend only on their technical skill, but on their shamanic pedigree. How can we explain people's belief or trust in bonesetters whose ability is inherited from their shaman ancestors? Does it relate to their belief in shamanism? The answer is more pragmatic than one might expect. The patients' trust in bonesetters does not come from religiosity, but simply from their desire to be healed. In other words, patients visit the bonesetters because they have heard or believe that they can heal them, not because they believe in shamanism or because the bonesetters are shamans. There are two important factors contributing to the way bonesetters are perceived in contemporary Inner Mongolia. First, political and ideological turbulences have created an environment in which shamans are at best ignored. Second, bonesetters no longer present themselves as shamans, although they do not deny that their ability to heal has been inherited from their shaman ancestors. It seems that their ancestors' 'spirits' flexibly adapted to the new social environment. Landy has called this phenomenon 'role adaptation'; he explains further: 'there are also possibilities for role adaptation insofar as elements of ideology and behaviour patterns of the impinging culture are adopted to enhance therapeutic efficacy, and even to strengthen the curer's status in his own society' (Landy 1977: 469).

Because of their adaptation to the changing social and political situation, bonesetters are now generally considered as medical experts rather than shamans, and are still well respected. Mongols still believe that bonesetters are the best at healing broken or dislocated bones. It does not mean that they do not respect Western medicine, but many Mongols, especially the older generation, still have fears about doing anything 'unnatural' to their bodies. They are frightened by the image of surgery or putting pins into bones, or wrapping a broken leg in plaster and keeping it in the air for weeks. There are often rumors about people who had broken bones treated with a western medical approach that did not heal, who then sought help from the Mongol bonesetters. They seek out bonesetters because they believe in their healing abilities, because these people have been proved to be the best at setting bones. This belief is reflected very clearly in the replies of patients to our question, 'why did you come to visit this doctor? Did you come here because he or she is a shaman?' A typical answer was: 'Because I heard that the bonesetters from Khorchin are well-known as the best bonesetters' (Li, 2003).

For non-Mongol peoples in Inner Mongolia, bonesetters provide an alternative method of medical treatment. Most of them are used to Western medicine, but have not been satisfied, and thus come seeking alternative help. Some just come in because they see the name *guke yiyuan* (bone specialist hospital) in front of the clinic. The fact that Mongol bone-setting is now established as part of contemporary medical practice as well as Mongol traditional medicine has helped bone-setting become part of the urban landscape. Although there are differences in expectation and belief between the different groups of patients, Mongol bone-setting is on its way to be becoming an accepted part of general medical or healing practice. Non-Mongol people visit the bonesetters because they really can heal broken bones. Mongols still sometimes visit bonesetters for other kinds of illnesses, such as headache, as well, more frequently in rural areas. Mongols tend to believe that one has to have faith in a doctor to be healed, for any treatment to work. It is thought that healing is accomplished both by external forces – medicine, treatment – and internal forces such as will and belief.

Dilemmas and Challenges

In their pursuit of scientific legitimacy, and in moving from a rural to an urban context, bonesetters have had to face a number of dilemmas and challenges. First of all, they face a conflict of identity, between the past and the present. On the one hand, bonesetters try to explain their treatments in terms of modern scientific theories, but at the same time they also continue to insist on the role of shamanic inheritance in conferring their abilities. The claim of descent, or at least a connection, to a powerful shaman, especially the powerful female shaman, Naran Abai, is still the most important element in gaining patients' trust, and also, ironically, in being recognized as a 'real bonesetter' by the state. Tracing their identity back to Naran Abai not only confers authenticity on bonesetters, but also provides a passport to official status. Showing that one has the ability to mend broken and dislocated bones does not help if a person has no official medical training, but if that person is related to Naran Abai it would facilitate official recognition.

The other part of the dilemma is that while bonesetters accept that their ability has been transmitted to them by their shaman ancestors, they nonetheless do not follow traditional ways. Traditionally, the healing powers of shamans are weakened if they leave their place of origin. But nowadays, most bonesetters have left their rural places of origin and moved to urban centres. Many of them moved from the countryside to join official medical institutions or more recently to open their own practices in the city, where they can get more patients and thus more income. It also goes against traditional practice to take fees from patients, because that too was thought to weaken the healing power. Patients might bring some goods to give as a sign of their gratitude, but bonesetters were not supposed to take money for their services. However, the market-oriented economy in urban centres, the cost of living, and the competition for work have affected bonesetters as much as anyone else. These days, bonesetters take fees for their services, like any other professional. In other words, bonesetters have changed from non-money oriented shamanic healers to business-minded modern medicine practitioners.

The challenge for Mongol bonesetters in urban environments today is that the injuries of urban dwellers are different from those of rural Mongolia, and they have to adjust their treatment accordingly. Patients in rural regions used to be mostly those who fell from horses and broke legs, arms, or backs or injured their hips or heads. But in the city, patients and their injuries are different. There are car and motorcycle accidents, construction site injuries, and other ailments related to modern life, such as strain-related injuries. Urban residents can fall down stairs whereas there are no stairs in rural Mongolia. Not only are there differences in kinds of injuries, but also the ethnic make-up of the patients is very different. In cities in Inner Mongolia most of the population is now Han Chinese. Therefore, patients are no longer only Mongols. Han Chinese and Mongol patients have different attitudes towards bone-setting. Mongols believe in the bonesetters and seldom question anything. Many Chinese patients, however, are more skeptical and therefore ask more questions, especially when visiting a bonesetter for the first time. The bonesetters have to deal with patients from different ethnic groups in different, culturally appropriate ways. According to our field work observation conducted in 2002, they treat the Mongol patients as if they had known them for ages and use a language that is very direct and familiar, whereas with non-Mongol patients they speak more formally, using polite and business-like expressions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analysed the social, political and economic influences that have shaped shamanic bone-setting in contemporary Inner Mongolia, and the process by which bonesetters have gradually transformed themselves from shamans to 'quasi' medical experts. We have not touched much on spiritual issues, such as the shamanic worldview and how shamans mediate between the visible and spiritual realms to heal broken bones through this mediation. Since bonesetters do not present themselves as shamans, it is difficult to research how they would feel as shamans and how they mediate between the two realms now. If they do not mediate between the visible and spiritual worlds as their shaman ancestors did, then they are not shamans in forms and perception, or in function and belief. Shamanic bone-setting has been adapting to the standards of modern medical science and rationality. It has been rationalized. However, it remains unclear whether this is merely an adaptation to Chinese state ideology and cultural standards, whether bonesetters' rejection of or distance from their shamanic basis is merely something for official consumption or whether it signals a definitive loss of shamanic belief. We still have little clear evidence of the potential, even in Inner Mongolia, for a shamanic revival.

Through the political and social changes of the last several decades in Inner Mongolia, popular perceptions of shamans have changed, as has the perception of bonesetters. Mongols still believe in the idea of shamanic inheritance, that bonesetters who receive their ability from their shaman ancestors are the more powerful healers, though paradoxically they no longer think of bonesetters as shamans. These days, bonesetters in Inner Mongolia are recognized as Mongol traditional medical practitioners rather than shamans. In other words, bonesetters are 'secularized shamans'. They no longer perform shamanic rituals and call on spirits, and they do not follow the Mongol shamanic value system, but they are still needed and respected by their patients.

Shamans who do not practice bone-setting still remain active in the country, but there is no active shamanic culture in urban areas of Inner Mongolia. Unlike Outer Mongolia – the Mongolian Republic – there has been very little public recognition or discussion of shamanism in Inner Mongolia since the retreat of hard line communism, and shamans have avoided getting involved in politics or trying to attract international aid. Shamans still play an important role in giving advice to Mongols in rural areas about auspicious dates and portents for the future. In the cities, however, Buddhist monks are the main providers of these services. In Outer Mongolia, on the other hand, shamans have been moving to urban areas and engaging in counselling services such as fortune-telling, counseling people on appropriate dates for marriage or house moving, and the like. They are also much more active in political and public life, even conducting official ceremonies to pray for the success and prosperity of Mongolia (Sai Yin, 2001).

The Mongol leaders of the early twentieth century who aspired to national independence and modernization envisaged a culture which would be both modern and distinctively Mongol. In the decades which followed, however, accepting modernity often seemed to mean giving up Mongol identity in favour of an identity drawn from China, Japan, Russia or the West. The example of bone-setting in Inner Mongolia, however, shows how quintessentially traditional Mongol practice could be modernized in response to changing pressures and opportunities to become a distinctively Mongol element in the modern urban culture of Inner Mongolia.

Notes

1 What is known as Ayurvedic medicine in India was introduced to Mongolia in the 16th century. There are still many Mongol patients who believe in Mongol medicine; the healing process is slow but it is considered superior to other forms of medicine because there are few side effects and it is perceived as healing the inner being. In India after independence official policy has been to promote a revival of traditional Ayurvedic medicine. With the passing of the British Raj, there was great emotional appeal in trying to revive the ancient glories of Ram Raj, with Ayurvedic medicine as a symbol (Taylor, 1976: 290).

2 There is no evidence that Teb Tenggeri was, in fact, a shaman (böö). He is supposed to have performed extraordinary feats, and he no doubt had personality, 'charisma' and power, but the Mongolian Secret History does not say that he was a shaman. Later historians assumed he was one because of his powers which were more than normal, and this story was taken up by today's descendants of Khorchin shamans.

3 In fact, bonesetters in Mongolia not only set broken bones, they treat other illnesses as well.

4 One such bone-setting hospital is located in Ganjig, a Banner centre in eastern Inner Mongolia, that is, the region where the powerful female shaman, Naran Abai, was born, and where her descendents still live.

5 In the West, too, the definition of a bonesetter is '[a] person, especially one who is not a licensed physician, who sets broken or dislocated bones.' *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*: Fourth Edition. 2000.

6 Interview with bonesetter B, 2002, in Hohhot.

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11

Shamanism in Transition: From the Shadow to the Light

Laetitia Merli

This chapter will present some field notes, which are written to allow a deeper understanding of contemporary Mongolia and, especially, to show the place of shamanism[1] in the city, where it tries to come out in public and to promote itself to get cultural recognition. To apprehend the phenomenon of the reconstruction of shamanism in contemporary Mongolia, after 60 years of Russian domination, where its culture and religions were run down, it is interesting to have a look back at history, from the far past to recent events, from Chinggis Khan to the Soviets, and see what was shamanism's place in Mongolian society. Then, I shall present some examples of shamanism today, the practice of it and the new areas it covers in post-communist Mongolia.[2]

From the Emperor's Court to Persecution

From reports in the 12th century and from *The Secret History of the Mongols* (1240) we know that there existed a system of beliefs 'whose essential traits (were) ecstasy and the ability to combat harmful powers and forces and to look into the future in order to interpret and prophesy, through the help of spirits which have been made subservient' (Heissig 1980: 6).

Worship of the Eternal or Blue Heaven was also widely spread in Inner Asia, and was already practised by the Huns of the first centuries A.D. The shaman was known as the mediator between the world of spiritual entities and the world of human beings. The official spread of Buddhism among common people in Mongolia, under its Tibetan form commonly referred to as Lamaist Buddhism, only began from the 16th century. We can claim that, at least from the 12th century, to the Mongol Empire up to the 16th and 17th century, shamanism was the main religious system in this part of the world. Chinggis Khan himself was a fervent believer in shamanism, and is by some considered to be a shaman himself. Before each battle, at the time of the Great Mongol Empire, the shaman was consulted to call the grace for the warriors and prophesy its development. *The Secret History of the Mongols* gives an account of Chinggis's court shaman who was so powerful, at least politically, that he was eliminated. Shamans were members of the aristocracy of the steppes and were serving the power. They played an important role in the construction of the Mongolian Empire, and as Heissig reckons 'at first the shaman and the chieftain of the clan or tribe were often identical' (Heissig 1980: 6). Far from being persecuted or isolated, shamans were the main religious practitioners.

Buddhism was known to the Mongols as early as the 13th century and Marco Polo reported that monks were competing with court shamans (Heissig 1980: 24). But the influence of this religion from Tibet was not very deep amongst the Mongols, as it was initially only a court religion, as well as attracting monks with a special interest in Tantric magic to Tibetan medicine. During the 16th century Lamaist Buddhism was adopted and promoted by Altan Khan, a descendant of Chinggis Khan and born in 1506. The slow and progressive conversion of the Mongols to the new religion was made possible by instituting certain laws against ancient religious practices and adapting Buddhist precepts to the already existing system of beliefs. The first law instituted by the Buddhist monks was the prohibition, in general, of any flesh and blood offerings. *Ongod*, small figurines, which were spirit supports or vessels, and which were worshipped as domestic gods, protecting flocks and people (Heissig 1980: 7), were seized, piled up and set on fire. Shamanic idols were replaced by the figure of Mahakala, a Buddhist form of Siva (Heissig 1980: 25), and traditional hymns and prayers were replaced by Buddhist exorcist and protective formulae. Horses and cows were offered to those who were able to recite prayers by heart (Heissig 1980: 37). Buddhist features were infiltrated into the already existing cosmology, hymns, rituals and practices, and monks gradually occupied ritualistic functions where before no special religious practitioner had been required. Marie-Dominique Even talks about the 'forger art', *'l'art des faussaires'*, whereby the Buddhist clergy adapted shamanic rituals for their own benefit (Even 1989: 143).

The spread of Lamaist Buddhism in Mongolia and its struggle against Shamanism was similar to what had happened in Tibet centuries earlier, when Buddhism replaced the Tibetan folk religion. The process of the assimilation and adaptation of one religion to a pre-existing religious background is well known all over the world. As Caroline Humphrey notices, Lamaist Buddhism when it arrived in Mongolia was already a syncretic religion highly mixed with Tibetan folk religion. Thus, Lamaist Buddhism was already adapted to fit the Mongolian ritualistic scene and to fulfil local communities' needs. There were no functions previously carried out by the shaman that the lama would not be able to carry out: seer, mediator with spirits, healer, exorcist, ritual practitioner and more (Humphrey 1980: 249). Buddhist monks occupied the holy and ritualistic sphere and Buddhism progressively became the official religion at the expense of shamanism.

Persecution in Recent History

In 1911, Mongolia declared its independence and became a monarchy under the Eight Bogd, Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, a forty-one year old Tibetan lama (Baabar 1999: 102). Mongolia became officially a theocracy ruled by lamaist monks with strong and powerful monasteries. Not for long, as in 1924 the Revolution turned Mongolia to Russian Communism. The advent of an atheist and Marxist ideology led to the persecution of Lamaism in Mongolia. The Great Purge, starting in 1937, persecuted 16,631 monks, most of whom were shot (Baabar 1999: 363). Out of 771 temples, 615 were destroyed. In 1938, out of 85,000 monks only 17,338 remained. Some turned lay, some were tortured and murdered, some were sent to work camps in Siberia. Truckloads of monks were regularly killed and buried in mass graves (Baabar 1999: 364). Monasteries were destroyed or transformed into cowsheds.

Shamanism, which existed in the shadow of Buddhism and survived in the Hovsgol area where it was more developed amongst the Darhad people and in the East area amongst the Buryat People, was not spared. Shamanic paraphernalia, costumes and drums were destroyed or seized and put into museums. All religious activity was under control and some shamans were put in jail. For sixty years shamanism was forbidden.

Freedom?

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly democratic Mongolia suffered tremendous economic and social changes, bringing about crises in every structure of the society. This transitional growth crisis is also the scene for a religious revival. The sense of having a Mongol cultural identity came out openly. The feeling of having a specific culture and above all of being different (from the Russians and the Chinese, first of all) has a weight in the process of rebuilding a national identity by reviving 'authentic Mongolian values' (a term borrowed from Aubin 1996: 305). Mongolian intellectuals, scholars, poets and artists, flattered by an audience in search of its own culture, are spokespersons for the 'Revival of Tradition'.[3] Societies were funded, in the early 1990s, to defend and promote Mongolian culture. In the search for roots, the 'pure' Mongolian culture is considered to be the one from Chinggis Khan's time, going back to the 13th century. In the way that those societies promote the idea, the religion considered to be the truly Mongolian faith is shamanism.[4] With democracy, shamanism came out in the open from the shadow where it had had to hide. Progressively shamans are trying to regain a place in the culture, and as an old system of beliefs practically forgotten by most of the Mongols shamanism has to be reconstructed from snatches of memories, or from ethnographic books in the search for 'pure' Mongolian shamanism.

Mongolian Shamanism : General Notions

'Eternal Heaven', *Möngke Tengri,* God of the Heaven and the Universe and 'Mother-Earth', *Etügen,* Goddess of the Earth, are the base of the cosmology. There are 99 Heavens and the Earth is considered to have 77 levels. The third world, the one between the Heaven and the Earth, is the world of the Sun, *Nart,* inhabited by living creatures, human beings and animals. Heavenly beings, Masters of land and water, and ancestors, spiritual entities of the three worlds, compose the invisible sphere invoked by the shaman. With it he has to negotiate in order to resolve the problems of his community and of individuals, and to obtain prosperity and protection. Shamanism can be reconstructed by analysing hymns and prayers that have been orally transmitted through the centuries before it became mixed with Lamaism. This way, it is shown that shamanism is 'derived from ancestor-worship' (Heissig 1980: 8–9). Familial networks of solidarity are important in Mongolia, and who other than ancestors could intercede between the spiritual and natural worlds on behalf of their descendants? Ancestors are worshipped in order to protect livestock and the family from the natural forces which are for herders the main risks they have to deal with. Ancestor entities with time tend to dissolve into nature and become associated with places like a mountain or a river. Nature in Mongolian is *baigal,* 'what is', 'what exists', an idea of nature which is not separate but includes human beings (Humphrey 1995: 136). Joining nature, ancestor entities are considered to link with other entities and this way they may be worshipped in order to gain protection and good fortune.

A great number of demons, spirits and ghosts wander here and there without any special localization and cause trouble to the living. *Lus* and *Savdag,* respectively the Masters of water and land, entities representing natural forces and living in natural elements, can be dangerous for human beings, unless they are properly worshipped and respected. The expression *'Lus-Savdag'* is of Tibetan origin.[5] *Lus* are snakes or dragons from the Buddhist pantheon and are associated with the aquatic and under world. *Savdag* are the Lords of the soil, land, mountains and rocks. It may appear surprising that the spirits who represent the basis of Mongolian shamanism have a Tibetan name. It shows how lamaist missionaries imposed Buddhist names and conceptions upon pre-existent entities in the Mongolian folk religion, in order to be more easily accepted and to appropriate the holy sphere. *Lus-savdag* incline to take revenge on the human beings who do not respect them. Rules of respect are of an ecological kind: not to pollute water, not to break the branches of a tree, not to dig the soil – otherwise misfortune happens. They cause drought, flooding, epidemics, illness and death. Attacking man as well his livestock, *Lus-savdag* are to be propitiated, given offerings to make them kind and protectors. It is also for them that one walks around an *ovoo* (or *oboo*), a pile of stones and branches indicating the pass between two valleys. They are able to turn into an animal, or more precisely they can take an animal to be a support or a vessel for them, and killing such an animal, even by accident, brings about serious consequences for the human. This is the explanation given by the shaman for tragic events and serious misfortunes. *Lus-Savdag* Lords settle at a river's spring and on the top of a mountain. *Ovoo* are their residences as well as *udgan mod* and *böö mod*, shaman trees. They are trees with weird shapes or deformed trunks that concentrate energies and are inhabited by spirits (Purev.1998). Such trees are worshipped with offerings that are placed at their bases and with ceremonial scarves, *hadag*, that are tied to their branches.

Shamans may perform a collective ritual but also lay people may make their own offerings and libations. *Lus-Savdag* travel between trees and passes, crossing rivers and lakes. As they always take the same tracks known by the shaman, they can be localized and then worshipped or avoided, since it is dangerous to be on a *lus-savdag* track. Ancestral spirits travel as well. Shamans talk about *Lus-Savdag* tracks and *ongod* tracks. *Ongod*,[6] spirits of deceased humans, generally deceased shamans, are the helper-spirits of the shaman. Most of them are the spirits the shaman inherits from his shamanic descendants, including ancestors who were shamans and from whom he inherited his shamanic essence. Then, during his career, he may be in contact with other spirits, depending on new contexts, which he will master with offerings and tame with his power. They will then be included in the shaman's helper-spirits. Even if *ongod* are associated with their burial place, they are linked and are in communication with *lus-savdag*, and also travel between shaman trees and *ovoo*. *Ongod* are the bridge between the shaman and the other world. Through *ongod*, the shaman can act as a mediator between the different worlds, but also act in the other world through their intermediary. *Ongod* as spiritual helpers will fight demons, negotiate with the *lus-savdag* and other malevolent spirits, and give messages from the Heavens.

This brief presentation portrays the shamanic universe. Spiritual entities stem from nature; ancestors and celestial gods inhabit an invisible world, within which the shaman moves about for the benefit of his community and clients, trying to find out the causes of their troubles and organizing the appropriate rituals for and offerings to the appropriate entities. I specially want to stress the point of this mobility. The shamanic system works like a communication system with the *udgan mod* (shaman tree) and *ovoo* (cairn) acting as aerials where spirits are picked up, so the shaman can be in contact with his entities wherever he is. One of the Darxad shamans in the city for a short period, told me he had to go to a *udgan mod* near Ulaanbaatar, to call his spirits. It was not a ritual to help people, but a private *séance* just for the shaman himself. It is said that the shaman has to call his *ongod* regularly otherwise he may fall sick. This was a special day for this shaman to compulsorily call his spirits. So he performed his *séance* at a *udgan mod,* shaman tree, near the city, where he called his spirits who were supposed to be in the Hövsgöl area. Thereby, he said he saw his house and his children who were in Tsagaan Nuur district and asked the *ongod* to watch over them while he and his wife were away. Because of the mobility and the communication system, the shaman and the shamanic system can easily migrate to the city without any conceptual incompatibility.

The Rebirth of Shamanism

The Shamanic Centre in Ulaanbaatar was founded in July 1996 by Tömör, a 74 year old, tenth generation shaman, native of Ulaan Uul, in the Hövsgöl area. He is a fascinating man and I think it is interesting to relate his biography, since he is the main character of the centre.[7] His father and grandfather were also shamans. He talks of having started his initiation at the age of seven. He was attending his father's rituals and in this way learned invocations. He came to the capital city at the age of nineteen to study at the Pedagogical Institute and then was a mathematics teacher for two years. But the 'call of shamanism', the 'shamanic illness' as they name it, that marks the symptoms of the shamanic vocation, made him quit this occupation. As 'the time was difficult', as Mongols put it when talking about the communist period, he started an artistic career that gave him the chance to express himself.

Actually, he was the driver of a theatre group going on tour all over Mongolia. But he also performed as a shaman, as an actor in folkloric events. Since he was not able to become a shaman at this time, he embarked on the stage, where music, song and dance corresponded to his potential shaman's needs (from his own comment). He insists on the fact that nobody, except his close entourage, knew he was a real shaman. One can appreciate that the stage provides a substitute for the rituals, where the shaman usually sings, drums, jumps. He explains how in some events where he was led to play the role of a shaman, he actually took advantage of the situation to really invoke his *ongod*. So the context was fake, but the invocations and the faith he put into the performances were real. This man illustrates the fact that people and potential shamans were cut off from their traditional roots, as Mongolian culture was interpreted simply as a folkloric and religion forbidden.

New Shamans

In September 1998 one of the shaman's students became himself a shaman, after a one year initiation, and then performed rituals beside his master. He is 22 years old, a modern and balanced man, very respectful of Mongolian culture. His girl friend and a group of friends come almost everyday to visit him at the centre. That gives to the place a very friendly and young atmosphere. His story allows one to understand how it is possible, nowadays, for a young man born in the capital to become a shaman.

His family is from Tsagaan Uur, a village on the East Side of the Hövsgöl Lake. There his father's grandmother was an *udgan* (female-shaman), but when the communist time came, she had to hide her practices, and when she died she was not able to bequeath her *ongod* to her children. So the shamanic tradition in the family stopped for two generations. In 1996 came the time for the young man to inherit his ancestor's spirits. He suddenly had some strange health troubles: he would lose consciousness and have spasms. He says that the muscles of his whole body were tensed into cramps and nobody knew the reason of this illness (epilepsy). His mother heard about Tömör and the centre in the city and came to ask for help and advice for her son. When she told the old shaman about his troubles, he said somebody in the family had to become a shaman and that this young man has been chosen by his ancestors to inherit the shamanic essence (*udha).* In this way, the young man started his initiation in September 1997, at the shamanic centre in Ulaanbaatar.

He first was his master's assistant, going everywhere with him to perform rituals in the mountains. He learned from the old man the 'shamanic words', *duudlaga* (call, evocation) and *tamlaga* (chant, prayer), to be able to call his *ongod.* It is said that only some basic techniques are learned by the disciple from the master as how to call the spirits and how to control a trance, but then each shaman has his/her own style and everything that happens during the trance or journey are supposed to be messages and behaviour from the different entities. Calling the spirits is the main activity of the shaman and also his distinctive feature. Some other practitioners are also able to solve problems in the community, tell the future, get rid of a curse, cure people and so on. But only the shaman can 'call the spirits'. This ceremony consists in the shaman drumming, singing and praying an evocation to the spiritual entities, leading the shaman to a special state of consciousness, allowing him to be in contact with the other world.[8] The disciple becomes a shaman when he demonstrates his ability to call his *ongod.*

This young man called his *Dayan Deerh ongod* in September 1998, at the *udgan mod* in Charga Mor't, a place on a small hill near the city. *Dayan Deerh* is worth some explanation: 'Universal Champion' (wrestler) or 'Powerful Shaman' ;[9] many myths tell his story. One of them portrays him as a powerful shaman who abducted the young Chinggis Khan's spouse. Chinggiss pursued them and the abductor hid in a cave with his victim. Afraid of Chinggiss's violence, he transformed himself into a stone statue in front of the cave. When the Khan arrived at the cave, located north of Tsagaan Uur, on the east side of the Hövsgöl Lake, he hit the stone with his sabre. This violent act brought about big misfortunes in the Khan's clan and among his cattle. Since then, the stone statue and the cave have been worshipped to pacify the avenger spirit. In the 19th century, lamas claimed that this *ongod* converted to Buddhism and they built a temple there. Communists did away with temple and stone, but the cave remained an active popular cult place and is still worshipped nowadays. For many, *Dayan Deerh* is considered to be the chief of all shamans, protecting them and giving them their helper-spirits (Even 1989: 399–405).

We saw above the importance of calling the spirits, as the shaman from Tsagaan Nuur was obliged to call his *ongod* on a special day. By the same token, the young shaman explained that in his family they had already lost one of his brothers and one of his sisters, out of seven children. The shamanic reason for their death is that they were not able to call their *ongod* when the situation arose. This means that shamanic descendants have to pursue the tradition and when the spirits want a shaman to conduct mediation, if nobody is able to satisfy them, misfortune occurs in the family. It is believed that the potential shaman, appointed by the entities, can die because he doesn't call his spirits. When the young shaman called his *ongod* in Charga Mor't, he said, this *séance* consisted in taking the power from his *ongod,* asking them for help and protection and particularly informing them that he accepted the calling to become a shaman. By accepting the call of the spirits and calling them back, he saved his life or at least he cured his epilepsy and protected his family from new misfortune, since if he had rejected the vocation, another brother or sister could have fallen sick or died.

Buyan,[10] 36 years old, was also trained by Tömör until she was allowed to open her own centre. She called her *ongod,* helper-spirits, and in doing so she was confirmed as an *Udgan,* female shaman. The ceremony took place in Buyan's own centre, a one room cellar, communicating with a hairdressing salon, in the basement of a city building. The ceremony consisted of Tömör, his assistant and

Buyan shamanizing in this small confined space with an audience all around the room and some looking through the open door from the hairdressing salon, where a lady was still under a big orange hairdryer. A person was designated to slaughter the sheep in the middle of the room, while Buyan was calling her spirits. The sheep was dismembered, skinned and cut. Its still beating heart was put on a plate and went around the room, where it circulated from hand to hand. Buyan had a violent trance. Foaming at the mouth, with white eyes and stiffened limbs, she fell on the floor. Her assistant held her with comforting words and made her smell incense to calm her down. When Buyan came to, Tömör, her master, cut the heart into two pieces and made libations to the *ongod* line, hanging on the wall, represented by nine small metal figurines placed on the top of a square piece of cloth that was cut into strips. Buyan's main helper-spirit, also *Dayan Deerh*, is represented by two small figurines, pieces of fur and a wooden horse tied to a piece of material, hung also on the wall. These material objects represent the shaman's ancestors and his/her spirit-helpers. During the ritual, they become 'animated' and serve as a material support for the spirits that the shaman calls. Tömör threw some red drops on the new pieces of material, offering this warm blood to *Dayan Deerh*. The plate with the heart passed through the audience from the room to the hair salon, which was now transformed into a makeshift kitchen. The sheep was then cooked and eaten by everybody there.

The first signs of Buyan's shamanic vocation came when she was eight. She had visions and could foretell future events. But she only started to shamanise when she was 26, when her husband died. As often in shamanism, even if in Mongolia the phenomenon is hereditary, the catalyst of the vocation comes from a personal drama bringing about a psychological shock. For many years she had been a healer and a bonesetter, but she also had serious troubles, which she defines herself, as 'a problem in her head', and talks about a violent crisis, which could be a hysterical crisis.[11] She heard about Tömör and came to the capital from Selenge province, where she was living, to try to solve her troubles. After just a couple of months, she was under Tömör initiation as she was recognised as a potential shaman. Tömör reckoned she was strong enough to practise as a confirmed shaman. Being strong enough for a shaman means to be able to call his/her spirits and to master them for the benefit of the persons involved in the ritual. As Buyan confesses, talking about her spirits: 'How to explain? It's like a restless and wild kid . . . and then this kid grows up and becomes nicer and wiser. That's it! And thanks to my master, I learned how to calm my spirits down.' Before her training she would fall and faint every time the spirits came to her. The *ongod* were controlling her. Now that she has mastered her helper-spirits, she was allowed to open her own centre.

Shamanism in the City

On the side of Buyan's room, above the cash desk, a list hangs on the wall. It is the same list that one will find in the main shamanic centre. Exactly 44 rituals are offered with prices ranging from 500 Tg to 40,000 Tg (from half a dollar to 40 US$). The association, its president, and Tömör, the old shaman, want to regulate and control shamanic activities in Mongolia, or at least in Ulaanbaatar. This new subsidiary, as they call it, should have the same price list, and the same rules as the ones applied in the main centre directed by Tömör. They also agree that the 'subsidiary' should give 40 per cent of its income to the main organization.

On the list hanging on the door, at Tömör's centre, we find the rituals linked to *lus-savdag*, bad words, fate, spell problems, but also propitiation to the *ovoo*, *Dayan Deerh* cult, offering rituals to the Fire, to the Heavens, to the mountains. The shaman first identifies the problem and its causes and then advises for this or that ritual. There exist multiple reasons to come to the centre. Usually, a new client comes on advice from, a friend or a relative who has already been. Ulaanbaatar is a small city where information spreads fast. Female, male, young and old people, business men and rich ladies as well as retired grandmothers come and visit. The waitingroom seems a representative sample of the urban society. They come to resolve a large range of situations occurring in life from social, emotional, and financial to health problems. In this time of economic and social transition, some people feel confused and most of them come to take advice about their future, about their job and money problems. Some women come and complain about alcoholism, which is destroying their husband and their life. Others worry about a son who is unemployed or students come about their studies and hope to pass an exam with the help of the shaman. In Tömör's centre, there also work young women who are assistants and accountants. They organise appointments, deal with the money from the rituals, explain to the people the different steps of the rituals, what to do with the offerings and all technical aspects. They help people to understand what they have to do. It seems that very few people know how to behave during the rituals, and they always ask a lot of questions, as they worry about not behaving properly.

Buyan's centre was once visited by Gantömör, a 35 year old man accompanied by his mother, who almost took him here by force to solve his alcoholism problem. An engineer before the 1990s, he opened a small garage when the liberal market allowed the Mongols to do free business. As he says, he became rapidly alcoholic because his clients were bringing vodka to thank him for his work. There came new responsibilities and financial problems, and he started to disconnect from this reality by drinking a lot. Sometimes he would drink for three days without a break and had many times fallen into a coma. His business started to decline and he had to close it with debts. His wife and children left him and he had to go back and live with his mother, where he fell into depression. The decision to visit Buyan came from his mother, who heard about Buyan in a newspaper, talking about the opening ceremony of her centre.

Self-Confidence and Grace

With this concrete situation, two concepts important in Mongolian shamanism can be introduced: *Hiimori* (windhorse) and *Buyanhishig*. The first one, translated 'windhorse'[12] concerns the personal energy of a human being. It is contained in the chest and can vary according to a person's action and behaviour. Powerful, successful, healthy persons have strong *hiimori*. Shamans are said to have a lot of *hiimori*. It is the power that allows them to cure other people, to communicate with the other world and specially to cope with the spiritual entities they have to deal with – things that are completely impossible for common people who don't have strong *hiimori*, and would be completely overcome by an encounter with spirits. Through shamanic rituals, offerings to Heaven, good actions, respect of Nature, it is possible to increase personal power. If we look deeper into human psychology, what else is personal power than self-confidence? The shaman's actions give or increase *hiimori*. He gives his clients the possibility to regain self-confidence that they may have lost through a difficult situation occurring in their life.

For a case such as alcoholism, Buyan told Gantömör that his *hiimori* was weak and that he had no self-confidence any more, and that was why he couldn't stop drinking. So, through rituals, she increased his *hiimori*. He was whipped fiercely at each ritual and was obliged to drink a mixture Bumia prepared with water, incense, milk and her own bile which she spewed out during the ritual. The effect was to make him also spew, to bring out everything bad from his body, and to make him disgusted next time he tried to drink vodka. Alongside the ritualistic elements they also talked a lot together, with the shaman giving him lectures about how he should have more confidence in himself and in the future.[13]

The second concept, *buyanhishig*, can be translated 'grace'.[14] Grace or felicity comes from the Heaven as a blessing and gives protection and good fortune. Amongst some people in the city of whom I enquired about these two concepts, they considered *buyanhishig* to be equivalent to 'good attitude'; if one has a 'good attitude' towards life, other people, animals and nature, and if one lives as a *yostoi* – i.e. in accordance with customs and the traditional way of life[15]

– *buyanhishig* will increase and misfortune will be avoided. *Hiimori* is personal and concerns only the individual. *Buyanhishig* can come to one and can also be inherited as a credit of good fortune. Shamanic practices as offerings or a shaman's *séance* can increase both *hiimori* and *buyanhishig.*

Past and Present: Shamanism in Reconstruction

Shamanism is not a dogmatic religion. It is a very adaptable and changing phenomenon, although a marginal phenomenon, touching a lot of people of every age, sex and social class to help them to cope with life. It can adapt to new contexts, evolving over time and managing its relationship with other religions and other ideas. The main point is the result people can get from the mediation of the shaman with spiritual entities. So it is difficult to compare the shamanism of the old days with shamanism today. Society has changed. People have new interests in life, new problems to deal with. So of course shamanism has also changed. But to what extent, we don't really know. Obviously, it has not evolved the same way in urban contexts, where it was more or less reinvented in an institutionalised context, with centres and associations, as in the countryside, e.g. in the Hövsgöl, from where it never disappeared completely. The concept of a shamanic centre where clients come and consult the shaman, with a fixed pricelist for stereotyped rituals and the system of subsidiaries is quite new. From a Buddhist perspective, the shaman is thought of as a lonely person, mysterious, on the margin of official religion. But in Mongolia today shamans have official stamps and papers from the Ministry of Justice, which is in charge of NGOs and cultural associations.

As we said before, quoting Heissig, shamanism can be reconstructed from the prayers and hymns that have been transmitted orally through generations. That is the way we have learned shamanism has stemmed from an ancestor cult to protect the flock and the family. In today's Mongolia, familial genealogies are rarely known, as during the communist time people started to forget their family line. Members of the aristocracy and clan leaders were persecuted, so that names and origins were hidden for the sake of living in peace, and progressively forgotten. When a shaman sees a new client, now in town, he asks about his clan and origins and family to know more about the his ancestors. But most of the time the person doesn't know anything about his family or the burial place of his ancestors. So the task of the shaman is more difficult. That is why it seems to me that shamanism has evolved in such a way that it is now more concerned with humans causing trouble to other humans than with ancestors or spirits causing misfortune. Whereas in the countryside troubles come from *Lus-savdag* or ancestors that have been neglected, in town it seems that the living, e.g. family, family-in-law or neighbours are more likely to put a spell on you. A range of spells and curses transacted from human to human has to be repaired by shamanic action. Gossip, resentment, jealousy, argument and insult are all causes of misfortune that can be cured by rituals that will increase *Buyanhishig* and *Hiimori.* In today's Ulaanbaatar most of the clients visiting a shaman for personal problems don't know anything about shamanism, or about the spiritual world or about their own ancestors, who could be their protectors. Thus the urban shaman has to adapt to this situation, and instead of finding the source of misfortune in a neglected ancestor or a non-respect of nature, he rather asks about an argument at work or with a mother-in-law. Having enemies, arguments, people envying you, or sometimes just buying an object from the market can bring misfortune. People explain this misfortune with reference to energy. You can get bad energy from an argument, from an object, from compliments from people envying you[16] or from a malediction by people insulting you.[17] Gossips bring bad luck.[18] So shamanism in towns has now to do with human psychology and everyday social problems, related to the new situation Mongolia has to face.

Why Shamanism?

Generally speaking, the motivation to visit a shaman comes from the feeling of unfairness that someone has concerning his share of good fortune. The shaman is seen as the person who can restore this kind of injustice. A 'breaking' in the normal process of life needs to be repaired. This discontinuity in normality may show up as a series of small incidents, in which the repetitive aspect may seem suspect and non-ordinary. Shamanism tries to restore continuity in the normal process of life by repairing disorder, and also tries to prevent troubles in life by attracting good fortune. With the coming of the liberal market, some visits are linked to business, to protect a new shop or get rid of a curse. In the summer of 2000, three secretaries, their manager, a lawyer and an accountant from a big company came to visit Tömör, the old shaman. Their company was on trial for swindle and they hoped that the shaman could help to restore the health of the company. The shaman diagnosed a lot of spells coming from jealous people and organised three rituals: 'Call for Grace', 'Closing the Door of Loss', and '*Dayan Deerh* Cult'. The first one as a general blessing, the second one to exorcise a spell of losing money and the last one to worship the *Ongod,* as the main entity from which to obtain protection and good fortune. The three men were whipped by the shaman, who said this was the way to 'cleanse them of bad energy and to make them feel like new-born babies'.[19]

This last example shows how shamanism is widely used for a lot of different problems and how shamans have had to adapt to all sorts of new problems, linked to the new economy and the new society changing from communism to capitalism. Getting a visa from the US embassy is also one of the new things that shamans are asked to achieve!

It seems that individualism, which characterises the new society, tends also to influence shamanism. Mongolian society now tends to individualism whereby the individual seeks his own way, place and fortune. Calling spirits and ancestors can be seen as a certain security, something stable in the changing world. Moving from the countryside to the city, shamanism flourishes in the new urban context where the focus becomes the individual citizen rather than the community. The emphasis shifts from the offering of ceremonies for the prosperity of the group towards more personal problems, with the use of divination and astrology.

Yellow Shamanism

Shamans and lamas are both consulted to solve problems related to incompatible astrological signs or to choose an important date. The shamanic centre is much frequented for astrological problems. Furthermore, the astrological *ongod* is *Dayan Deerh,* the entity that was said to be 'Buddhized' by missionaries, as they claimed that this *ongod* converted to Buddhism. Because of these two features, the use of astrology and the main *ongod* being *Dayan Deerh,* this urban centre where Tömör works is considered to be a 'yellow shamanism centre' (yellow from Buddhism, which is called the 'yellow religion', *shar shashin*). *Tankas* and Buddhist statues are in the room where shamanic rituals are performed. One may think that the success of this centre is owed to the fact that it offers a perfect syncretism of the two religions. In the urban context of Gandan, the big lamaist monastery, with 'red lamas' doing exorcism rituals similar to shamanism, astrologist lamas, diviner lamas and many other mediums and healers, a person who wants to cope with misfortune or insecurity about the future has a choice in the matter of practitioners. That is why, in these times of rediscovering religious practices, the centre appeals to a lot of people who find there a comforting Buddhist environment, within which they can take up again with their local gods and ancestors, *lus-savdag* and *ongod,* through the shamanic *séance.*

Another point in favour of shamanism is that everybody can be a shamanist, as all human beings are the product of nature;[20] there is no enrolment, and no proselytism. Anyone can use it when they need it. In this resides the success of the revival of shamanism in modern Mongolian society.

Shamanism and Mongolian Identity

In general, this revival of religious feeling corresponds with a resurgence in the desire, amongst many, to claim a specific Mongolian identity. Under communism, Mongolian culture was pushed to a folklorist level, as an old tradition not compatible with the new soviet age of progress. Nowadays the liberal market and freedom of speech and religion allow the Mongol people to regain their culture. Shamanism and Buddhism are both instrumental in this process of rebuilding an identity.

The creation in 1996 of the shamanic centre stemmed from the idea that shamanism was the religion of Chinggis Khan, and that it should return to a central place in Mongolian society today. This should help the association in promotion of shamanism's revival and its re-establishment as part of Mongolia's cultural identity.

New NGOs have appeared recently to promote religion and culture in general in Mongolia. Some defend Buddhism, some shamanism, some both, as well as Tantrism, the cult of Chinggis Khan, Mongolian poetry and history.[21] A group of shamans from the Hövsgöl area have their association under the aegis of academic scholars and plan also to open a centre in the capital city. They criticise the 'Yellow Shamanism Centre', mentioned above, as they claim for themselves a form of 'pure shamanism' confirmed by Mongolian ethnographers involved in the upholding of a certain authenticity. Some shamans involved already live in the city, some will settle and some will visit occasionally. They want to establish an official organization to promote shamanism, justify their beliefs and respond to foreign missionaries invading their country. They want recognition and to be accepted as an integral part of Mongolian culture.

Shamanism, without the visible symbols of religion such as monasteries or monks dressed in red, usually belongs in the shadows, to the secret realm of Mongolian identity. That is why organizing it is seen as a way to be stronger and to proclaim their existence in order to counterbalance the Buddhist religion and to resist Christian proselytism. Recently, articles about shamanism have multiplied in the Mongolian press, with shamans' write-ups and conceptions, and traditions related to shamanism. A journalist has also published a small book telling the story of a shaman living in Ulaanbaatar. He then published an article in which he accused another shaman of being involved in black sorcery, of casting spells and of asking a lot of money for this. This shaman then responded with an article in the same newspaper, in which she defended doing such things, claiming that her *ongod* was not able to do evil, and explaining that she is oppressed by some jealous shamans since she is one of the strongest shamans in Mongolia. One can imagine that people reading the newspapers are delighted with such stories. Shamans thereby come out in public. From the hidden and secret realm with which it is usually associated, shamanism now appears in the press like any other news item.

The Fifth Conference of the International Society for Shamanistic Research that was held in the summer of 1998 in Ulaanbaatar provided a suitable frame for representation and recognition, the organisers having invited shamans and researchers to sit side by side. A 'ritual evening' ended the conference, where only recognised shamans were allowed to perform, surrounded by cameras from international researchers and the press. At the end of the day, it was no longer a conference about shamanism but a shaman festival.

In this article, I have hoped to show how, after centuries of Buddhist persecution and years of soviet prohibition, shamanism is coming out of the shadows to the light of the public scene, on TV and in the newspapers, searching for cultural recognition. Today shamanism is not in the secret of remote places but has international connections and websites on the Internet. It is coming out of its isolation to participate in the process of rebuilding Mongolian cultural identity. Some of the shamans involved in this process are former teachers of mathematics, literature and history. It is not a backward movement, but a real cultural movement with intellectual and ecological claims. In this cultural process, traditions, religious beliefs, history, everything that makes a culture, are returning in a chaotic way. Regaining one's culture is also a way of regaining the state. In the newspaper *Sühbat*[22] the president of the shamanic association explained how encouraging shamanism is also a way of increasing the *Hiimori* of the nation. Shamanism can help the country to develop its 'personal energy'. This period of transition where everything has to be rebuilt, relearnt and reinvented, is also a period of tension. The black hole left by the collapse of communist ideology is a new ideological and religious battlefield, where Christian missionaries (most of them from USA), the Buddhist establishment supported by India and by some American Buddhist Orders, and shamanism, supported by Mongolian cultural societies, strongly nationalist, and by international New Age networks, have to struggle for cultural recognition and to establish themselves as recognised religions in Mongolia.

Author's Note

This chapter stems from research for my PhD dissertation in Social Anthropology at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales de Paris*. The field work stretched over 28 months from 1998 to 2001, mainly funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the *Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale* of the *College de France* and the British Council. My data stem from encounters I had with 21 shamans: 9 women and 12 men. Some I just met and observed; with 14 I had conversations, interviews and participant observation. I used a video camera in the process of the research and most of my recent data are filmed. (Together with research on shamanism, I also try to develop theory and analysis in Visual Anthropology.)

Notes

1 Shamanism will be used here to designate what in Mongolian we call *Böö mörgö*: a system of beliefs which is characterized by the actions of a specific figure, called *udgan* for women, *böö* for men, or *zairan* for the very powerful men, who, skilled with special powers, are able to call and to communicate with spiritual entities in order to heal, bring good fortune, bring rain, and solve problems for humans.

2 Mongolia is still a communist country but I still use this label of post-communist to designate countries which are in transition from *hard* communism, I should say sovietism, to a liberal market capitalist type of society.

3 Revival or reconstruction? What is 'tradition' when a culture was run down for 60 years? This is not the place to discuss this, but this should be noted in any cultural studies on Mongolia.

4 From interviews with five cultural and youth associations (leaders and members), it emerges that this feeling is quite strong. For some extremists, Buddhism is not respected as it is a foreign religion that has been imposed and is not considered to be part of 'real' Mongolian culture.

5 In Mongol, *gazriin ezen,* 'Lords of places'. They are local spirits associated with a mountain, a river, a tree.

6 The term *ongod* has a wide meaning and includes many conceptions. The singular, *ongon*, can mean 'virgin, holy, sacred'. It is used to name a spiritual entity but also the small figurines, worshipped as idols, which are the material support of the entity. As with a tree, lake, rock, mountain and an animal, *ongon* designates the spirit and the object or place the spirit is associated with or lives in. Usually the plural is used because as helper-spirits of the shaman *ongod* are a collection of ancestors spirits inherited from generation to generation in the shamanic descendants. Each collection has its own story, its own biography, individually identified by the shaman and associated with a place, usually a burial place. (See Caroline Humphrey's paper 'Chiefly and shamanist landscapes', 1995).

7 A film was made about Tömör and his centre in summer 2000. *Call for Grace*, by Laetitia Merli, 30 mn, English subtitles, Granada Centre, University of Manchester.

8 The purpose of this paper is not to discuss the anthropological concepts of shamanism and I won't enter into details of debates in shamanic studies concerning concepts such as 'trance', 'journey of the shaman's soul', 'possession by spirits', which are still debated by specialists.

9 The words wrestler and shaman have the same script in Ancient Mongol. Only their pronunciation and script in Cyrillic differ from each other.

10 Buyan was born in Bajan ölgii, from Tuvan origin.

11 Bumia has violent emotional and behavioural crises under the influence of alcohol, which she consumes in large amounts.

12 *Hii* is 'air, breath' and *morj* is 'horse'. It is a Buddhist concept. 'Wind horse' is also a small flag with a horse on it that people tie to cairn all over the Buddhist world.

13 Two months after the first time he met Buyan, he was completely changed. From a man under the domination of his mother, with a grey, yellowish face, completely depressed,

he turned into a younger-looking man, smiling and with a lot of projects on his mind. I phoned his mother to get news and heard that Gantömör was in Korea on business. The effect of shamanism in such a case of 'psychological problem' is obvious.

14 *Hishig* means 'result, favour', and *Bujan* is 'benefit, kindness'. So it can be translated as 'result of kindness'.

15 *Yostoi* means 'with custom'. Shamans use it a lot to differentiate between what one must do and what one is not allowed to do. Drinking is seen as not '*yostoi*' and can decrease *hiimori* and *buyanhishig*. *Yostoi* can be seen as everything that is in accordance with Mongolian traditional values, and living a *yostoi* way of life is the best way to get a blessing from the Sky. Some nationalists I've met use this concept for their anti-foreigner propaganda. Living without respecting traditional custom and nature, and the elders and also listening to Rock and Roll can be a risk to invite misfortune.

16 *Tsagaan hel am,* 'White tongue', malediction from too many compliments from jealous people.

17 *Har hel am,* 'Black tongue', malediction from too many insults also from jealous people.

18 I cannot develop all these concepts in this paper. They are here to suggest an understanding of shamanism in Mongolia today, and will be developed in further work.

19 Cf *Call for Grace.* Laetitia Merli, 2000, film with English subtitles, 30mn. Granada Centre, University of Manchester.

20 More and more foreign tourists come to visit Mongolia with the wish, close to fantasy, to meet shamans and to participate in a ritual. The New Age movement exploding in the West, has developed a tremendous interest in shamanism, partially because of its ecological aspect but mainly, I think, because of the trance, and its hysterical aspect. Shamans have always fascinated the West. Communicating with the essence of the world, jumping and singing crazily, the shaman is now also consulted by Westerners to solve their psychological problems or with the hope to become shamans themselves.

21 See also Aubin 1996 on the revival of the national past and the promotion of authentic Mongolian values.

22 Ulamjlalt ës, Ch. Suhbat interview by Narantchimeg, June 2000.

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12

Buddhism in Buryatia: Past and Present

Tsymzhit Vanchikova

Before the spread of Buddhism Buryats[1] were adherents of indigenous and shamanic beliefs with various local variations. Buryat shamanism was an intricate system of beliefs with a complex hierarchy of deities and complicated sacrificial and initiation rites. Buddhism assimilated local cults and beliefs giving rise to a regional syncretic form of Buryat Buddhism with its own specific peculiarities, first of all connected with the history of the Russian state.[2] The dissemination of this new faith was accompanied by the replacement of local religious rituals and customs of tribal and kin character with lamaist forms of everyday cults. Thus, the autochthonic protective cults of ancestors were replaced by the lamaist cult of protective deities – *srunma* – dharmapalas, to which to autochthonic deities became vassals of different ranks – servants, etc. In establishing the new cult of guardians Buddhist purposes were accentuated – protection of religion and clergy, moral education of laymen in the spirit of Buddhist precepts and values, respect and devotion to church and secular authorities. The patriarchal structure of the family came to determine the order since the protector of the head of the family was considered the all-family patron. The hereditary succession of this cult was transferred from father to son. Buddhist temples were first constructed on the territories of traditional lineage or tribal goups. These ethnic-territorial groups were replaced by larger confessional and territorial units, in which Buddhist temples gained the role of community centres.

In the very beginning Buddhism penetrated to the Transbaikal region through several tribes that came from Mongolia, including *tabanguty, tsongoly, atagany* and *khataginy.* They brought their own monks as they settled among Selenga Buryats; from there Buddhism began to spread to other territories. Buddhism spread among the *khori* Buryats in the middle of the 18th century, among Alar and Tunka Buryats in the 19th century and among other western Buryats only in the beginning of the 20th century.

In comparison with the spread of Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia, where it only met with different local religions and cults that could be adapted to a flexible policy of coexistence, in Buryatia it met with the powerful world religion of Christianity, the official state religion of the Russian Empire.

It is commonly stated that Buddhism spread among the Buryats beginning from 1741, the date it was officially recognized as a religion of Russia by the Decree of Elisabeth I. According to archival documents and evidenced by the reports of the first Russians to visit Buryats, however, Buddhism was already spread in Buryatia in the second half of the 17th century (*Materialy po istorii russko-mongolskikh otnoshenii. 1636–1654. Cbornik arkhivnykh documentov* 1974: 317; Pubaev & Sanzhiev 1991: 3–4; *Sbornik dokumentov po istorii Buryatii* XVII v. (1960).

Before the 18th century Buddhism in Transbaikalia was not a structurally organised religious confession. There were no stationary temples, lamas migrated with the rest of the nomadic population, and religious rituals were performed in transportable yurts of local princes as well as in large communal tents. While in Mongolia by the 18th century Buddhism was a state religion with a well developed religious structure and established religious centres with their own incarnated lamas and hierarchs, which played an important role in the social, political, economic and spiritual life of the population, Buryats at that time still did not perceive themselves as an independent ethnic and cultural entity, but associated their religious affairs with these centres in Mongolia.

Lamas from Mongolia and Tibet often travelled to the Transbaikal region, sometimes even settling there. In 1712, for example, 150 Tibetan and Mongolian lamas fled to Buryatia after military clashes in their homelands (Baradiin 1926: 80), contributing greatly to the spread and development of Buddhism among the Buryat population.

The first Buddhist monastery in Buryatia Sartulski (Burgaltaiski *datsan*), was founded in 1707 (Pubaev & Sanzhiev 1991: 4). The next *datsan*, Tsongolski (Khilgantuiski), one of the largest monasteries of Buryatia, was founded in 1730 by Damba Darzha Zayaev, the first Buryat khambo-lama; its first abbots were the Tibetans Agvan Pungtsok and Lobsan Sheirap.

The Russian government was quite worried by the close contacts of Buryats with Buddhist centers of Mongolia, China and Tibet, controlled by the Manchu empire. From the very beginning confessional affairs of Buryats were referred to the sphere of external relations and international policy of Russia in the Far East. Russia had a clear interest in breaking these contacts and wished to weaken religious influence on Buryats-Mongols from the Mongolian and Tibetan church, for instance by promoting the creation of an independent Buryat Buddhist church organization. The first step was appointment of the post of pandit-khambo-lama with residence at Gusinoozyorskii temple, which became the organizational centre of Buddhists in the Transbaikal region and later of all Russian Buddhists including Tuvinians and Kalmyks.

These issues were taken into consideration when establishing the frontiers between Russia and China in accordance with the Burinskii agreement of 1727. This agreement promoted the integration of formerly separated Buryat Buddhist monasteries into one unified system and the establishment of an independent management of Transbaikal Buryat clerical affairs. The spread of Buddhism thus accelerated the integration processes among formerly separated Buryat tribes and contributed to the political and spiritual consolidation of the Buryat society, including the setting-up of a new type of spiritual culture, the transition from indigenous traditional culture of the tribal character to the national, all-Mongolian and all-Buryat one on the basis of confessional consolidation of the ethnos.

The end result of the Russian conquest and establishment of the Russian-Mongolian borderline in 1720 was, first, that the Baikal region became politically separated from Mongolia and its population (in general from the Mongolian socio-cultural world), and secondly, that the Russian socio-economical system, the Russian ethnical environment, and the interaction between Christianity and Buddhism predetermined the general course of the Buryats' history. A new field of ethnic-cultural processes was formed, giving rise to what was subsequently called 'Buryatia' and the formation of the Buryat ethnic group (Mikhailov 1999: 29), for which Buddhism became one of the main factors of social and cultural development.

In an attempt to control the development of Buddhism in Russia, the Russian Empress in 1741 issued a decree about the religious affairs of 'Lamaists'. According to this decree the Russian authorities must undertake registration of all lamas and places of worship in Buryatia. The decree authorised the position of 150 lamas in Buryatia and at the same time prohibited crossing the frontiers and contacts with foreigners. These lamas were made to swear allegiance to Russia and were exempted from taxation and other duties, while officially allowed to preach in Transbaikalia (Vashkevich 1885: 36). For Buryats, Tuvinians and Kalmyks it was an act of official recognition of Buddhism as well as of its historic connection with the treasures of ancient cultural traditions of Central Asia.

In the beginning the religious affairs of the Buryats were within the competence of the Russian Ministry of foreign affairs and of the local governor's administration of Eastern Siberia. After 1841 they were handed over the Ministry of Internal affairs in Sankt-Petersburg and guided in accordance with several Decrees on Buddhism. These ruling bodies controlled all administrative posts in monasteries and permissions for constructing new and repairing old monastic buildings. In 1853 special rules (*Polozhenie o lamaistskom dukhovenstve*) for regulating administrative and economic status of Buddhist monasteries and their monks were edited.

It is necessary to mark that in spite of the policy and decrees of the Russian government Buryats nevertheless continued to have stable contacts with the rest of Central Asian Buddhist world and Buddhism managed to develop quite successfully: the penetration of Buddhism among Buryats proceeded, particularly among the Eastern Buryats.[3] As for the Western Buryats Buddhism was not as popular since shamanism was prevailing among them. Instead, some western Buryats were christened and adhered to the Russian Orthodox Church though their beliefs were still intermingled with shamanic elements.[4]

Buddhism began to spread among western Buryats beginning in the second part of 19th century due to the activities of Agvan Dorzhiev (1853–1938), a famous Buryat Buddhist leader of Tibet and Mongolia. Best known among the western Buryats was the Alarskii *datsan*, situated in the territory of the Alar' Buryats, whose ancestors fled there after the defeat of Galdan Boshoktu-khan to the Manchus. The comparatively quick spread of Buddhism in Russia can be explained by its remoteness from the central Russian regions and by the close relationship of the Buryats with Mongolia.

So by the end of the 19th century Buddhism in Buryatia already constituted a rather well established and independent church that could creatively oppose and withstand the policy of the Russian official bodies striving to control it.

The Rise of New Cultural Centres

The main achievements of Buryat Buddhist architecture, sculpture, book-printing and fine arts from the 18th to the first quarter of the 20th centuries were related to the appearance of the *datsans*, the stationary Buddhist monasteries and temples, which became both religious and cultural centres. Traditional Buddhist arts flourished there, active literary, publishing and printing activities took place as well. During this period there were constructed about 44 Buddhist temples, which, undoubtedly, played important role in the rise of Buryat culture in general. Among the largest and most famous of the Buryat Buddhist monasteries were Gusinoozyorskii, Kizhinginskii, Tsugolskii, Aninskii, Egituiskii and Aginskii. From an architectural point of view the first Buryat temples were marked by an eclectic mixture of Russian, Mongolian, Tibetan and Chinese elements. Beginning from the 19th century, temples were built in the Tibeto-Mongolian style.

A vivid example of such a style is Agiinskii temple or *datsan* known also by its Tibetan name 'Dechin Lhundubling'. It was and still is one of the largest Buddhist centres in Eastern Transbaikal region[5]. By the middle of the 19th century it became one of the most flourishing Buryat monasteries with approximately 1000 monks or lamas, with 4 faculties: philosophy (1858–1890), astrology (1867), tantric (1880), medical (1884) and in the beginning of the 1900s a faculty of Kalachakra Tantra (Duinkhor) was opened. Officially there were 60 *emchi* lamas – doctors of medicine. It was particularly renowned as the centre of Tibetan medicine and astrology, xylography and book-printing; a printing house was opened in 1860.

By the end of the 19th century the monastery represented a small village of more than 20 religious and auxiliary buildings, surrounded by houses where monks lived. The *datsan* complex is a vivid page of architectural art of the Buryat people, one of its outstanding patterns.

The first Buddhist temple in Europe was built in Sankt-Petersburg at the initiative of Agvan Dorzhiev, by the means of the 13th Dalai-lama, Agvan Dorzhiev and money collected among the Buryat, Kalmyk and Mongolian people in 1909–1915. This temple is a combination of Tibetan Buddhist monastic and of European architectural traditions of the early 20th century.

The role of Buddhism in the development of Buryat culture was enormous and complex. In Buryatia the influence of Buddhism in the 19th to the first quarter of the 20th centuries was marked by rapid development of literacy, opening of monastic schools for studying Buddhist sciences and cult practice and the emergence of printing in the Tibetan and Mongolian languages. There appeared numerous highly educated Buddhist monks, experts in oriental languages, translators, editors and commentary compilers, philologists, etc. Local professional painting, sculpture, architecture and Buddhist applied arts were developed.

One of the most distinguished features of Buryat Buddhism was the appearance of local block-printing houses and extensive editing activities of the monks. The first mention of books published in Buryatia is dated to 1820. The process of wide publishing and translating activities of Buddhist monasteries began after the ban by the Russian administration of 1853 an acquisition of books from abroad. Prior to it, Buddhist books were imported from Tibet, Mongolia or China, but because they were quite expensive and not easy to obtain a tradition of copying was widespread. According to the Decree of 1853 importing of objects of Buddhist religious cult and literature was allowed only through a custom-house. The increasing number of monasteries and monastic schools and the deficiency of literature for studies also contributed to the development of an intensive xylographic printing network.[6] Thus, for more than 30 years at the beginning of the 20th century Buryat monasteries not only fully provided themselves with religious literature, but also, in spite of limitations superimposed by government directives, supplied books to Mongolian monasteries and neighbouring territories. In the Buryat printing houses mainly ritual texts and literature for monastic schools and textbooks in the Tibetan language were published. Buddhist canonical collections, *sumbums* (collected works) of learned Tibetan and Mongolian monks were brought to Buryatia mainly from Tibet. Concerning religious literature for the lay people, it was published mostly in the Mongolian language and was mainly of ethic and didactic character. All books for publication were to be sent to Sankt-Petersburg for censorship. The last information about monastic bookprints is dated to the beginning of the Soviet period. According to 1923 data about 2000 books of different titles were published by all Buryat monastic printing houses (*Delo po uchyotu izdatelskoi deyatelnosti datsanov Buryatskoi respubliki* 1923).

The major part of the books and all wooden block-prints (klische) were lost in the 1930s. Large collections of Buddhist literature were gathered by Russian and Buryat scholars, however, and are now preserved in libraries of Sankt-Petersburg and Ulan-Ude (Sazykin 1988; Sazykin 2001; Uspensky 1999–2000).

The War on Religion

After the Revolution of 1917 a war on religion was proclaimed in Russia. Buddhism, as well as every other religion in the country, became the object of massive anti-religious propaganda organised by the governing bodies. By the end of the Civil War, Buddhist leaders headed by Agvan Dorzhiev (1853–1938) were obliged to recognise the Soviet authority. The Buddhist community split into '*obnovlentsy*' (reformers), who were trying to reorganise Buddhist church for survival in new circumstances, and '*konservatory*' (traditionalists) objecting to it.[7]

By 1923, i.e. the period of setting-up of the Buryat-Mongolian ASSR on the territory of the ethnic Buryatia (together with Ust'-Orda and Aginski districts) there were in operation 211 orthodox, 81 old-believers (*semeisky*),[8] and 44 Buddhist monasteries in addition to hundreds of sacred places – *obo*, *ayikha* (shaman forests), etc. Altogether there were about 15,000–17,000 lamas (National Achives of the Buryat Republic List (Opis) 1, Delo 82: 54r–54v).

The legislative position of Buddhism was outlined by the Decree of 17th December 1925 issued by Central Executive council of the Soviet of peoples' commissars of the Buryat-Mongolian ASSR (which brought into practice the Decree of 23 February 1918 on the separation of the state from the church), clearly of a repressive character.

In 1926 in the Buryat-Mongolian ASSR 'The Union of militant non-believers' (*Soyuz bezboj'nikov*) was founded; it initiated the atheistic work in all regions of the Republic. As a result of planned elimination of the Buddhist church and clergy, Buddhist culture was totally undermined, all Buddhist temples were closed and destroyed, and Buddhist clergymen were driven out and repressed. By the end of the 1930s in Buryatia there was not a single temple left in operation. In the archives of the Administration of the People's committee of Internal Affairs (NKVD) of East Siberia the following data about the quantity of lamas of 44 Buddhist monasteries is given: in 1916 there were 11,276 lamas, 1927: 7566, 1930: 5327, 1933: 2758, 1934: 1515, 1935: only 1271 lamas, merely one tenth of the number in 1916.

In 1936, 22 out of 29 Buddhist temples were closed under the pretext of being situated in the frontier zone. The monks were accused of being 'state enemies' or 'Japanese spies.' Similar processes were carried on in Kalmykia, Tyva and Mongolia. Buddhist clergy were the most persecuted part of the population during the period of repression, similar to the clergy of other religious confessions.[9] As a result, Buddhism as a living religion practically ceased to exist in Russia.

After World War II slight changes in the policy towards religions began. In 1946 permission was given to reopen Aginski and to build the Ivolginskii Buddhist monasteries. Although this did not mean a change in general policy towards religion, at least Buddhism in Buryatia was allowed to exist as an officially recognized religion. Besides these two centers, where it was allowed to have only 20 monks, dozens of monks freed from concentration camps illegally served in villages in almost all regions of Buryatia. Although it cannot be said that people completely obeyed the authorities, the Buddhist followers were deprived of the possibility of public expression of their belief; this was retained by the elders in everyday family life and in traditional consciousness. By 1970 only a few lamas remained and until the beginning of 'perestroika' only two Buddhist monasteries were in operation.

Perestroika

After the beginning of the process of 'perestroika' some juridical actions were taken to establish constitutional rights of freedom of belief. After the 1990 law of Gorbachev on the freedom of conscience, the religious situation in Russia began to change. Religious confessions almost eradicated during the Soviet period are now in the process of revival. The process of restoration of destroyed temples is going on, forgotten religious traditions and rituals return to the everyday life of the people. This process is connected with increasing national self-consciousness and with the search for ethnic roots,[10] in which Buddhism is considered to be one of the main fundamental strongholds of national culture and originality. General change of political climate in the world, new possibilities for the development of religions inside the country, the increased interest in Buddhism occasion the necessity of reviewing of the role and significance of current processes in religious life not only of the Buryat population, but of the Republic in general and still is one of the most pressing tasks of religious studies.

A survey of the religious situation in Russia, carried out by the Keston Institute in England together with a group of Russian sociologists of religion for the last 10 years in 78 administrative regions of the Russian Federation (Buryatia was not included in these studies), revealed an extraordinary variety of forms of religion, despite the fact that Russian Orthodoxy, as in pre-revolutionary Russia, is unofficially acknowledged as the state religion (Burdo 2002: 17).

Nowadays in the Buryat Republic alongside the Buryat traditional religions a wide scope of religions and religious trends are represented. Quite a number of new religious communities and groups have appeared, the number of which increases every year. A good majority of the Slavonic population, i.e. Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians profess the Orthodox Christian religion. A peculiar ethnic cultural group of old-believers called *semeiskie* is singled out from among the Russians. There are small groups of Jews, Catholic Poles and Moslem Tatars as well as people of various ethnic groups – adherents of Protestantism and Adventism from western parts of the country, and followers of modern religions, such as krishnaism, bakhaism, munism, etc.[11] In 1997 the Association of Christian churches was formed on the basis of 12 Protestant churches. In 1998 in Ulan-Ude the building of a Moslem mosque was started. Such is in brief the current information of the present day religious situation in Buryatia. From this statistical data it is quite vividly seen how varied and active the religious life in contemporary Buryatia is. Shamanism is not included here, because it is a special subject.

In contemporary Buryatia, alongside the teaching of traditional Gelugpa school, some other schools of Buddhism, such as Nyinma, Kargyud, Karma, Sakya started spreading. The Tibetan esoteric sect Dzogchen is also becoming quite popular. Some Korean and Chinese schools of Mahayana Buddhism, Thevaradin schools from Thailand and Burma, and some other East and Southeast Asian countries have also attempted to establish their centres in Buryatia.

A new phenomenon is noticed currently of the appearance of lay religious unions. Some of them contain a mixture of Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and other teachings, for example, 'The community of Krishna's consciousness', 'Society of the disciples of Shri Chinmoy', 'Roerikh's society', Bahai, etc.

A specific everyday syncretism was and still is the distinguishing feature of the inhabitants of the Transbaikal region, people paying respect to several religions at the same time. Of course, this syncretism in many cases is far from expressing an individual's core belief.

In spite of the complex ethnic and confessional structure of its population, the Republic of Buryatia is considered by specialists to be one of the most stable territories of Russia. This is mainly due to the two leading religions of Buryatia – Buddhism and Russian Orthodoxy (ROC). At present the relations between the Russian Orthodox and Buddhist churches are not strong, but in general they are formally polite and are of a constructive character. Interreligious tolerance characteristic for Buryatia has its historical foundations: Russians confess Christianity, Buryats confess Buddhism and shamanism. The adepts of each religion consider their religion as their own national and cultural property and don't try to make other peoples the object of their religious missionary efforts and in turn they are not afraid of religious expansion from the opposite side.

There is a difference between the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and Buddhist organisations in their activities and attitude towards everyday social life. As far as concerns the ROC in Buryatia it mainly conducts traditional religious, cultural and proselytising activities that are aimed mainly at church reconstruction, spreading and publishing religious literature. It calls monks to refrain from direct participation in any political actions, movements and parties (not a single candidate from ROC runs for the elections). The Buddhist church, laymen as well as the clergy, takes an active part in the activities of social and political organisations and in different political campaigns. Lama Samayev F. and Choibonov M. were elected as deputies to the People's Khural (legislative body of the Buryat Republic), lama N. Ilyukhinov ran for the elections for the State Duma of the Russian Federation, earlier lama E. Tsybikdorzhiyev was elected a deputy (member) of the State Duma. In 1996 Buddhists took an active part in the foundation of the Congress of the Buryat People, the chairman of the 'Buddhist foundation' became its president. Even the Buryat branch of the Christian Democratic Party of Russia, named as Buddhist-Christian Union, was organised by Buddhists with neutral or, to be more precise, an indifferent attitude of ROC and other Christian confessions to this fact (Zhukovskaya 2000: 69).

In the fall of 1997 B. El'tsin accepted a new Law, concerning religions that limited the rights of religious minorities and formally restored the state control over religious life. According to this law the registration only of those religious communities (faiths) that have a period of more than 15 years of being in Russia (called 'traditional', namely, Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism) were allowed. By this law limits to foreign religious groups were imposed. Yet this law could not restrict the reviving spectrum of religious life, either in Russia or in Buryatia.

As far as concerns the contemporary situation of Buddhism in Russia in general, by the end of 1999 there were 160 Buddhist organisations and associations.

Eight of these were in Moscow, eleven in Saint Petersburg and two or three in Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Samara, Vladivostok etc.

The religious situation in the Buryat Republic may be judged from the data received from the Ministry of justice. In 2002 there were registered 168 different religious organizations and associations in the Republic. Of these 40 were Buddhist temples and communities.[12] The Buddhist clergy follow mainly the same Buddhist doctrines, but in the organizational aspect they look rather diverse. There are two organisations that have received registration at federal level. They are the Buddhist traditional sangha of Russia (pandita khambo-lama Damba Ayusheev) and the Central religious board of Buddhists of the Russian Federation (lama Ilyukhinov Nimazhap). At the Buryat republican level two organisations have been registered: 'Maidar', headed by Danzan Khaibzun lama (Samaev Fyodor) and the Union of Buryat Buddhists, headed by Choidorzhi-lama (Budaev Aleksandr, the ex-khambo-lama of the Buddhist church). 18 organizations, either temples, dugans or communities, belong to Buddhist traditional sangha of Russia, three belong to the Central religious board of Buddhists of the Russian Federation (two of them are situated outside the Republic), five belong to the 'Maidar', six belong to the Union of Buryat Buddhists and the rest are registered as self-dependent organisations.

Governing Bodies

In 1922, at the first congress of Buddhists of Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous districts of the Far-Eastern Republic and the RSFSR, the Central Religious Council of Buddhists (CRC) was set up, which was to be the supreme board in charge of the activities of soviet Buddhists. In the 1930s, as a result of repression, the CRC ceased its activity. In 1946 it resumed its activity under the name of the Central Religious Board of the Buddhists of the USSR (the USSR CRBB).

One should note that the Federal Law on 'The freedom of consciousness and religious organisations' which was passed on 25 October 1990 wholly deprived the government of the control over the religious processes in the country. This accounts for the situation that is being observed now in Buryatia with the Buddhist confession that formerly had a pronounced hierarchy and independence in the body of the USSR CRBB. Now the former USSR CRBB and the Buddhist sangha has broken into separate independent communities: the Traditional Sangha headed by khambo-lama D. Ayusheev and the Religious Board of Buddhists of Russia (or Dharma-centre), headed by N. Ilyukhinov, each of them regarding itself as the heir of the USSR CRBB. In this situation numerous autonomous small private temples (*dugans*), lamas and believers take a neutral position.

In the background of this situation which had weakened positions of the Buryat Buddhist church and clergy, the Kalmyk and Tuva Buddhist communities had announced their autonomy by registering their own religious boards. In 1991 a Union of Kalmyk Buddhists was organised with Telo-rinpoche as a head of it and in 1997 'The Board of Kambu-lama of Tyva' was formed as an independent community.

Obviously there are strong centrifugal and separatist tendencies among the Buddhist clergy in contemporary Buryatia. For instance, almost every community or rich lama wants to build an individual monastery or temple. One should note, however, that the crisis of economy and culture in modern Russia has also influenced the state of religion in Buryatia.

Recently the activities of lay Buddhist social, cultural and educational organisations, foundations, different units of Buddhist laity and some others have increased such as 'Society of Friends of Tibet', Agvan Dorzhiev's foundation, Akhalar foundation, Aryabala community, Green Tara, etc.

Education of Monks

Until the 1970s all religious sermons and duties were performed by old Buddhist monks who had survived from repressions. The previous monastic educational system was destroyed and there was an urgent need to teach novices. To this purpose it was decided to found a higher Buddhist educational institution in Mongolia. The training course lasted for five years. This period was far from the previous standard system of education of more than 10 years. Nevertheless this Buddhist Institute has prepared a new generation of young monks who have continued the Buddhist tradition in Buryatia. From 1970 to 1995 45 young monks received diplomas at the Buddhist Institute in Ulaanbaatar (Soninbayar 1995: 39).

In 1991 a Buddhist school was opened at the Ivolginskii *datsan*. In 1999 it received the official status of the Buddhist Institute. About 120 pupils from different parts of the country now study there under the tutorship of well-educated Tibetan, Mongolian and Buryat monks.

At Aginski *datsan*, which restarted functioning in 1946, a monastic school was opened in 1990. It has also received a status of an Institute in 1993 when besides the faculty of philosophy a medical department, a branch of the Institute of Tibetan medicine and astrology of Dharamsala, was opened there. This Institute received a state license of the Russian Ministry of education in 1998. This temple was famous for its philosophical faculty (opened in 1858–1870) and medical faculty (opened in 1884) and for its learned scholars in Tibetan medicine and Buddhist philosophy before its destruction. At present reconstruction work is taking place at this temple and the number of monks has increased to over 40.

At the Ivolga temple the process of restoration of the *jud* (tantric) practice as well as the Kalachakra tantra was started with the help of Tibetan teachers as well as the meditative practice. For this purpose special places were organised in Alkhanai and Kurumkan. Many people from all over the Russia gather there for the meditational practice in summer time.

The Board of the Traditional Buddhist sangha of Russia is trying to implement measures for improving the situation for educating young monks. On 24 April 1999 there was a meeting of all head-lamas of Buddhist temples of ethnic Buryatia and the heads of Buddhist lay communities. At this meeting it was decided to establish a three-stage structure of monastic education, giving the certificates of bachelor, master and doctor. This system has already begun working at Aginski monastery. 70 students are studying there now (40 of them are lay people). They will study there for 10 years, and the best of them will continue studying at the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in India for six years. The Ivolga Buddhist Institute and other schools will gradually adopt this system. Now new requirements will be accepted concerning the age and the educational status of a student. It is necessary to have secondary education for the people who want to become students of a monastic Institute. At this meeting also the 'Rules of certification and licensing Buddhist clergymen' were adopted. These measures were necessitated by uncontrolled appearance and the increasing presence of a number of charlatans, and above all by the necessity to observe strictly the rules of the canonic teaching and to improve the quality of religious teaching.

The most important step in this direction was taken several years ago when dozens of Buryat young boys were sent to Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in India. But in general the system of Buddhist education is not supported financially on a regular basis.

Missionary Work

Of special interest is the missionary work of Tibetan monk-refugees, some of whom have received Russian citizenship. Most of them teach at Buddhist educational institutions and lead active missionary work. One of the most vivid personalities is geshe Jampa Tinley, former representative of His Holiness the Dalai-lama to Russia. He came to Russia for the first time in April 1993 and received Russian citizenship in 1998. He was born in 1962 in South India in a family of Tibetan refugees and has graduated from the seven-year course at Varanasi; at 25 he took monk's vows. In one of his interviews to a local newspaper he said that his main task is to help to revive Buddhism and Buddhist education for monks and to create Dharma centres for the lay people. Due to his proselytising talent his activities are quite successful. He has acquired many disciples all over the Russia who consider him to be their guru. All his sermons have been published in Russian in large editions.

In addition, Revd Eshi-Lodoi Rinpoche, another well-educated Tibetan high-ranked monk, is worthy of mention. Before being sent by the Dalai-lama to Mongolia and Buryatia to restore Buddhism and Buddhist tradition he served as a high librarian at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala. He has also received Russian citizenship and settled down in Ulan-Ude (geshe Jampa Tinley – in Moscow). He is most popular among the population of the Republic and he has a lot of followers all over the Russia. This year he is finishing the construction of a large Buddhist temple with auxiliary buildings that is intended to be a new centre for the further dissemination of Buddhism in the region.

In general there is a specially friendly attitude towards all Tibetans on the side of the Buryat people. It has historic roots, as all Tibetans are connected with the name of Dalai-lama and Tibet itself, which was traditionally considered by Buryat believers to be a holy land inhabited by gods. Buddhists of Buryatia traditionally had close relations with Buddhist communities of Mongolia and Tibetan lamas from India, relations that are now being restored as a stimulus for the development of Buddhism.

Buddhists of Buryatia are quite actively involved in some international political concerns, in particular, regarding the status of Tibet. Lay communities like 'Society of Friends of Tibet', 'Green Tara', Agvan Dorzhiev's foundation, 'Aryabala' promote active propaganda in support of the struggle of 'Tibetan people for independence from communist China'. In general all Buddhists unofficially support the position of Dalai-lama with regards to this issue.

Buddhist Women

Quite a new phenomenon for Buryatia is the feminist Buddhist movement, where women take an active part in the process of revival (see Bareja-Starzynska and Havnevik, this volume). Lay communities of women, such as 'Green Tara' and 'the Buddhist women's centre' were organised. Though the latter's members have not taken strict nun's vows they have managed to construct a special building that is planned to be the first Buddhist nunnery in Buryatia. This centre works in close co-operation with nuns (*khandamas*) from Mongolia. Women also are active mediators between the Buddhist church (monks) and family religious needs. Buryat women always played a leading role in traditional (popular) Buddhism, did various work for the temples, sewed monks' garments and so forth. After reaching old age they passed their household duties to daughters-in-law, cut their hair and took religious vows of *geninma* (lowest religious vows for lay people). For many years when visits to Buddhist temples were impossible women and the elders were the only thread that connected Buryat population with Buddhist temples and monks. Though Buddhist traditions during the Soviet period were almost totally broken, three centuries of Buddhist sermons among Eastern Buryats have formed a special type of traditional culture in which Buddhist rituals and outlook, Buddhist artistic and folk ideas and values have become an inseparable part and have penetrated the consciousness of the people.

Legality and Control

Obviously the new situation has demanded a new attitude from the ruling bodies. A series of normative documents regulating relations between the state and the church have been signed and some are still under discussion. But there is some kind of a juridical vacuum now, with no thoroughly worked-out or thought-out religious policy. In this connection there arises the question of what direction the complicated process of religious revival in Buryatia may take, what effect it may have on political and socio-economic development, and whether it can be manipulated to some degree or if it is quite uncontrolled and might procure unpredictable results, as may be observed in other regions of the former USSR.

Together with Orthodox Christianity and Shamanism Buddhism was officially recognized as a traditional confession of the Buryat Republic (in Kalmykia shamanism does not have the status of a traditional religion).

The difference in the religious situation or official status between Buryatia and other republics with a Buddhist population is vividly seen in the content of the laws on religion issued in Buryatia, Kalmykia, Tuva and Mongolia. The laws of Tuva (issued on 16 March 1995), of Kalmykia (31 October 1995) with few inconsiderable exceptions in their preambles wholly correspond to Russian Federal law and there is no essential difference in their contents.

But there is another situation in which the law gives predominance to one religious confession. This is seen in the Mongolian Law 'About relations between the church and the state' issued in 1993. It states the following: 'Taking into account the unity of the Mongolian people, its historical traditions of culture and civilisation, the State will give respect to the predominant position of the Buddhist religion in Mongolia. But it will not object to the confessing other religions' (The Law of Mongolia About the relations between the church and the state. Chapter II, article 4, item 2). At the same time the state tries to have control over the Buddhist church: item 8 of the same Chapter pronounces: 'The quantity of lamas and the places of churches are to be controlled and regulated by the State.'

In the draft of the Buryat law On religious activities on the territory of the Buryat Republic (of 1994) all this was taken into consideration. It was stated that it is necessary to take into account historic peculiarities and modern realities of religious life in the Buryat Republic, the increasing role of religion and the church in culture, education and politics, to acknowledge religion as an important integral part of the spiritual culture of any ethnos and as one of the main factors of national ethnic identity and agreement not only in Buryatia, but in the Baikal region as a whole where the Buryats live. This draft was rejected by the Russian Ministry of justice as containing too many discrepancies with Federal Law. After being worked over there appeared a new edition issued on 23 December 1997 (No 610–1). In general the process of revising laws is not yet finished and the position and the status of religion in Buryatia will mainly depend on its content and quality.

Before the October revolution Buryat people mainly lived in the country. The number of Buryats settling in the cities (Verkhneudinsk, Irkutsk, Chita, Kyakhta) was never large. That is why Buddhist monasteries were built in the rural locality and functioned among countryfolk who had regular contacts with monastic educational centres of Mongolia, Tibet, Amdo, etc. An intensive process of urbanisation among the Buryats began in the 1930s, connected with the formation of the Buryat Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1923, with its administrative, territorial, industrial and political organisation and with the formation of the system of middle and higher educational institutions, mainly in its capital city, Verkhneudinsk (now Ulan-Ude). People freed from the camps usually settled in the city as it was prohibited for them to return to their native places.

Beginning in the 1990s the situation changed along with decollectivization and the crisis in agriculture: people from the rural population started moving into towns where they formed religious communities, often concentrated around their communal *dugan*s. These communities are places for conserving local and national identities, while adapting to a new urban environment. Now there are Buddhist monasteries, temples and chapels (*dugan*s) in both towns and villages. The village temples are mainly communal, built by the joint efforts of the parishioners, while in towns there have appeared many private *dugan*s.

Buddhism in the city is subject to the process of intense change, as social change is more intensely experienced there. Through urban Buddhist temples Buddhism reconciles the country folk traditions with the social changes in their lives. Therefore urban temples play the social role of solving the complex process of adaptation by nomads to the settled, urban life. They help them to adjust to the changed way of life, to alleviate stresses incurred as a result of migration and giving psychological comfort. At the same time public Buddhist religious ceremonies create a new space for the indigenous culture to represent itself publicly giving Buddhist temples roles as cultural centers.

Conclusion

The religious processes and the contemporary religious situation in Buryatia are clearly manifestations of the all-Russian phenomenon of a religious revival: from attempts at restoration of the pre-revolutionary situation to a wide pluralism of religious life, and from the attempts of authorities to control and manipulate religious communities and to the acknowledgement of their independence. The characteristic feature of this process is that alongside the restoration of Buddhism an active process of revival of shamanism and neo-shamanism is going on. Other important characteristics are the individualisation of Buddhist religious practices, effecting their secularisation and withdrawal from the monasteries, and a process of feminisation. Current changes in the sphere of religious communities have both quantitatively and qualitatively changed the confessional situation in Buryatia; these processes constitute important themes for future research.

Notes

1 In the context of modern life of the Russian society the term 'Buryatia' is used in the following two meanings: 1) an official administrative name designating the territory of the present Buryat Republic and 2) the territory of 'ethnic Buryatia' that coincides with the borders of the former Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1923–1937), that embraces all territories of various ethnic communities of Buryat people within Trans- and Cis-Baikal region.

The Buryats are a Mongol-speaking nation, having synthesized the cultures of the East and West for the last three centuries. They connect their history with that of Mongolia as the territories of modern Buryatia, of Irkutsk and Chita regions, where the Buryats live in several regions, in medieval times were a component part of 'Ara Mongol', that is of Northern Mongolia. The same can be said about Buddhism. The Buryat written historical tradition connects the spread of Buddhism with the activities of Altan-khan of the Tümeds. For example, in the Buryat historical record written by Ayushi Saagiev in 1845 we find: 'They say that at the time when we were the subjects of Altan gegen-khan, he invited Sodnam Jamtso, the Dalai-lama of Tibet, who converted us into the religion of Buddha Sigemuni and pacified our devils and evil spirits' (Tsydendambaev 1972: 623). These written data are also testified by the facts and information transmitted in oral family traditions. So, for example, in the beginning of the 1890s during archeographic expedition we have found in Isinga village of the Eravna region 16 volumes of 'Prajna-paramita sutra' (Juu mingatu) that according to the family legend were brought by their ancestors from Mongolia.

2 V. T. Mikhailova names the following forms or variants of religious syncretism that existed among the Buryat population by the end of 19th-beginning of 20th century cc.: 1) Buddhists performing shamanist rituals more or less regularly; 2) Christened Buryats

that were officially considered to be Orthodox Christians but still continuing to conduct shamanist rites; 3) Christened Buryats settled in separate villages and continuing to have relations with their Buddhist relatives; 4) Christened Buryats who were adhering both to Shamanism and Buddhism; 5) Strict traditionalist shamanists avoiding contacts with Orthodox missionaries, Buddhist monks; 6) Buddhists that were Christened but not following Christian precepts (formal Christians); 7) Buddhists, Shamanists and Christians at the same time; 8) Christened Buryats who were settled in special karymskie villages and married to Russians and finally Russianised (Mikhailova 1999: 95–96).

3 The history of this process still needs to be studied and the concrete stages of its development as well as its regional peculiarities are to be revealed and researched.

4 Orthodox priests came to Siberia just after Russian military men and settlers and started organising Christian missionaries and evangelising the local population.

5 This monastery is situated in the territory of theAginskii Buryat Autonomous Region (Aginskii Avtonomnyi Buryatskii okrug) of the Chita region. Its construction is considered to be officially started in 1811, though a previous structure must have existed earlier. One Buryat historical chronicle reports, that there were no Buddhists at that time except one old woman-shabagants and one quvarak that is why local people were obliged to give their sons to the monastery. The parents didn't want to do so because they were shamanists. After finishing the monastic school these young boys became the first lamas at their temple (Toboev 1995: 23).

6 Some idea about scale of publishing activities in Buryat monasteries gives 'The Catalogue of typographic blockprints', compiled in 1911 by the chancellery of pandita khambo-lama D.-D.Itygilov. This Catalog was published by B.Rinchen in 1959 in Satapitaka series. 1696 Tibetan and Mongolian texts (on 50,000 wooden blocks) are mentioned in it (Rinchen 1959: 8).

7 This movement was closely connected with the Buryat nationalist movement that was aimed against the policy of the Russian autocracy, russification and christianisation (Gerasimova 1957).

8 Russians adhering to the old form of Russian Orthodox Christian religion were moved from the western borders of Russia to the Buryat lands for the development of agriculture and for strengthening the boundaries with Mongolia.

9 While at this time Russian Orthodox churches and Moslem mosques though not numerous were still functioning.

10 Buddhism was not the only reason for the revival of national self-consciousness and national identity. They also were also based on shamanism, revival of the all-Mongolian idea of Chingis-khan and folk hero Geser.

11 According to the latest data of the State Committee on interreligious and interethnic affairs of the Buryat Khural there are 168 registered religious organizations all together.

12 60 Orthodox parishes, 30 churches and chapels.

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13

Beyond the Soviet Houses of Culture: Rural Responses to Urban Cultural Policies in Contemporary Mongolia

Peter K. Marsh

Throughout the seven-odd decades of single-party rule in Mongolia in the 20th century, state-run cultural centres were a part of everyday life for many Mongolians. From the capital city out to the most remote *sum* (*sumu* or county) centre and herding-agricultural collective, the ruling Mongolian Peoples Revolutionary Party (MPRP) maintained spaces for the public production of culture. The rural cultural centres were particularly vital to the Party's goals for the cultural uplift (*soyoliin deeshlüülekh*) of the Mongolian people. They allowed the Party to both suppress 'non-progressive' or 'feudalist' cultural elements and introduce the urban-oriented and nationalized culture of the 'new society' (*shine niigem*). When people participated in a musical ensemble or theatrical production in these centres, for example, they were not only learning a new art but also assimilating the cosmopolitan beliefs and perceptions that shaped it.

The MPRP's collapse in 1990 brought to an end the Party's tight control over cultural expression in these rural cultural centres. But it also ended the institutionalized dominance of the urban centre over rural cultural production. The state cultural institutions in Ulaanbaatar no longer held sole authority to define cultural authenticity. But when Mongolians of this period, fired by newly aroused nationalist sentiments, began to look beneath the detritus of the socialist ideologies, they found that little of the traditional or pre-Revolutionary artistic culture had survived. Many staff in these rural centres instead realized how they had been saddled with a predominantly urban-oriented and professionalized artistic repertoire that few of its performers wanted to perform and few in their communities wanted to pay to see. They experienced what Bruce Grant (1995) has called the 'double irony' of Soviet-era cultural policies: rural communities have lost much of their distinctive local culture as well as the Soviet symbols of success and progress they traded it in for.

In this chapter we will examine the dilemmas facing these cultural centres by focusing upon the development of centres in Arkhangai *aimag* (province), located in central Mongolia, from the time of the Peoples' Revolution on. Limiting our examination to one province will allow us to look in-depth at some of the major issues that have acted upon and shaped the development of cultural centres throughout the nation. This development speaks to broader questions concerning the relations between the City and the Countryside during the socialist and post-socialist periods. Throughout the socialist period, the Party drew these cultural centres towards urban, cosmopolitan cultural traditions. The government largely halted these efforts after 1990, leaving many rural cultural centres with little to show for their decades-long investments in cosmopolitan culture. Some rural centres are now even consciously turning away from the urban cultural traditions represented by the state-run cultural institutions in Ulaanbaatar and developing hybrid or symbolic traditions in their place that aim of reinvigorating local and regional cultural identities.

Cultural Centres and Revolutionary Culture in Rural Arkhangai

One measure of the importance of cultural centres to the goals of the early Party leadership is the speed with which they were established throughout the country following the Peoples' Revolution of 1921. Within the first few months, groups of singers and musicians in Ulaanbaatar were forming the first musical groups: a mixed instrumental ensemble, wind ensemble, and choir (Tsendorj 1983: 11). Each performed music and songs with 'Revolutionary content' to audiences in the capital city. By 1923, the Soviet Communist anthem 'Internationale' had been translated into Mongolian and was being popularized in Ulaanbaatar by a music group called 'Nardomoos'. The Party established the first amateur fine arts cultural centre in the city centre in the following year (Tsendorj 1983: 12). Named the 'General Sükhbaatar Club,' it featured performances of music, song, and dance, as well as short theatrical productions (Dashdorj 1971: 60). So successful was this club that at a general meeting of the People's Revolutionary Party in the following year a resolution was passed stating that 'in the activities of spreading the Party's ideology, clubs are very important. We should take the matter of opening clubs as vital to the teaching and enlightening the people' (Tsendorj 1983: 11).

These initial efforts in Ulaanbaatar rapidly spread to the countryside. In 1924, in Arkhangai province, members of the provincial Party began to organize performances of 'Beijing Lama,' a song-drama about a dissolute lama that had been popular on the stages of Chinese theatres in the capital prior to the Revolution (Regsuren 1973: 173).[1] Within two years, local Party organizations had already begun to set up the first cultural centres in the province called 'Red Gers' (*Ulaan ger*) in the provincial centre, Tsetserleg, and thirteen *khoshuun*s (provincial districts); within the next few years, every *khoshuun* in Arkhangai had either a Red Ger or a similar type of centre called a 'Red Corner' (*Ulaan bulan*) (Regsuren 1973; Mijiddorj 2003: 171).[2] Red Gers, as their name suggests, were Mongol *ger*s transformed into culture centres, while Red Corners, on the other hand, were actual squared buildings. By 1930, Tsetserleg's Red Ger began to operate a mobile film projector that traveled to the different *khoshuun*s showing silent films from the Soviet Union. In the early 1930s, a 'Woman's Club' was organized and a stadium constructed in Tsetserleg, while its Red Ger was upgraded to a 'Club' (*Klub*). With this higher status, the provincial Club was charged with overseeing the cultural activities of all the province's other centres. In the emerging political hierarchy, *sum* level centres had to report to those at the *khoshuun* level, which in turn reported to the central Club. Officials in Tsetserleg were in turn responsible to the Ministry of Culture, in Ulaanbaatar. This spoke-like, top-down structure of oversight and responsibility allowed Party leadership the ability to oversee and control all of the official cultural activities in each of the provinces. Such a structure also had the effect of restricting the ability of local cultural officials to work across provincial lines with officials in neighboring provinces. Such policies reinforced the official, or vertical, lines of control and political hierarchy in the MPR while simultaneously hindering the development of any regional, or horizontal, identities that might challenge Party authority.

Party literature was forthright about the political purposes of the rural cultural centres. In his *History of Arkhangai* (1974), D. Regsüren (1973) describes them as places that allowed the Party to 'destroy feudal culture and build a new culture of the people [in its place]'.[3] He writes that the Party intended to draw upon, develop, and strengthen elements of the people's ancient cultural heritage in the process of forming this new culture. 'Upgrading' the people's culture (*soyoljilt*) in such ways would make it 'socialist in content, national in form,' which would in turn 'directly support the people's labor initiatives and political activities.' In such ways, the Party matched its support for cultural work in the countryside with its political mission of building a socialist state in Mongolia.

Assimilating a new culture is as much a bodily as an intellectual effort. Thus the Party worked to *involve* Mongolians in new forms of cultural activities. In their first decades of operation, for example, cultural centres throughout the nation introduced a wide variety of amateur artistic genres, including an early form of theatre (*yarianii jüjig*), song-dramas (*duulalt jüjig*), a Chinese form of light opera (*shii jüjig*), and comedy shows (*shog*), as well as new forms of music, song, and dance. They also posted wall newspapers (*khaniin sonin*) and organized public readings of contemporary literature and periodicals. Many developed small museum exhibits (*jijig üzigdel*), organized sport competitions and games, and served as the meeting places for local chapters of the Pioneer youth organization. In Arkhangai, some centres organized classes in reading and writing, mathematics, and music and dance, and put on 'themed' evening parties (*sedevtei üdeshleg*) for the people of the community (Regsuren 1973: 174; Mijiddorj 2003: 171–172). The Party was clearly seeking to relocate the centre of production of culture in the 'new society' from the home to the public stage, where such activities could be more easily overseen and controlled.

The nation's rural cultural centres were important means of disseminating newly composed songs and music, particularly the 'songs of the new era' (*shine üyein duunuud*). In the 1920s and early 1930s these were mostly revolutionary songs, such as 'Red Flag' (*Ulaan tug*), '*Shiwee Khiagt*,' and 'Red Sun' (*Ulaan naran*). In the 1930s, a less revolutionary musical and literary repertoire was coming onto the scene from the pens of a new generation of Mongolian composers, poets, authors, and arrangers working at the national level. These included works by artists who would become towering figures in twentieth century Mongolian literature, including Arkhangai natives D. Natsagdorj, Ts. Damdinsüren, and S. Buyannemekh. New songs entering the repertoire of the rural cultural centres included 'Rich Mongolia' (*Bayan Mongol*), 'Son of a Cattle Herder' (*Ükherchin khüü*), and 'Cultural Jewel' (*Soyol erdene*), all three of which remain well-known today. New theatrical productions that came to Arkhangai in the 1930s included the opera 'The Three Sorrowing Mountains' (*Uchirtai gurwan tolgoi*), considered to be Mongolia's first and some say finest; music-dramas, 'Tsend the Commisioner' (*Tsend komissar*), 'People's Courage' (*Ardyn zorig Khurts*), and 'Cuckoo' (*Khökhöö*); and theatrical works, 'I Am Not' (*Bi bish*), 'On the Road of Progress' (*Urgashlash zamd*), and 'Struggle' (*Temtsel*) (Regsuren 1973: 175). In disseminating this new artistic repertoire from the nation's political centre to the rural cultural centres, the MPRP was building a distinctly national artistic culture, a standard body of art, literature, and music that would be experienced and shared by Mongolians in similar ways across the nation.

The standardization of this repertoire demanded the parallel development of performance skills. The increasing length and complexity of the new repertoire, particularly the theatrical and operatic works, required increasingly advanced skills on the part of the performers and encouraged artistic specialization. Whereas the talent of locally trained performers in the early years of the Revolution was usually sufficient, the new and more challenging musical repertoire demanded that musicians attain some mastery of their instrument or art.

At the same time, the variety of musical instruments being used narrowed. The new repertoire privileged the newly nationalized 'folk' instruments, including the *morin khuur, khuuchir, yatga, yoochin,* and *shuudarga,* only a few of which were common to the traditional Arkhangai musical culture. New instruments from Russia, including the mandolin, guitar, and accordion, were also being introduced. At the same time some of the more traditional and local kinds of musical instruments were being sidelined. Elderly (*akhmad*) performers in the Arkhangai theatre, for instance, still remember a local herder who used to perform 'tuned stones' in the centre until the 1970s. In addition, the new repertoire demanded that performers learn to read music, perform within a musical ensemble, and follow the lead of a conductor, among other skills. Those who could not keep up with the new artistic demands, typically locally trained amateur performers, were slowly replaced between the 1960s and 1980s with those who had received professional training in the music schools of Ulaanbaatar and elsewhere.

Performance spaces were also being adapted to the changing repertoire. Whereas many centres had some form of performance space, the new repertoire required ever more explicitly defined stages and the theatrical machinery that came with them, including stage lighting, curtains, and later, sound amplification. In addition, in clearly demarcating the performer from the audience, stages demanded new cosmopolitan forms of behavior and etiquette on the part of the performers and audience, including sitting in chairs, watching in silence, giving applause, bowing, wearing special dress or costumes, and so on. Not only was the new musical and theatrical repertoire introducing cosmopolitan sounds, sights, and ideas to these rural communities, it was also requiring people to receive, interact with, and behave in relation to them in entirely different ways than had been expected in traditional Mongolian society.

The Party reached beyond the stationary cultural centres in their efforts to introduce Revolutionary culture into rural areas. Several of the centres in Arkhangai organized mobile Red Gers (*nüüdliin ulaan ger*) that traveled to remote villages and *ail*s, or nomadic family encampments, in order to bring the new culture to the people who could not – or would not – enter the centres themselves. These entourages often included musical troupes and mobile film projectors, as well as so-called 'agitation brigades' (*ukhuulga brigad*), groups of revolutionary partisans charged with firing up the people with news and speeches about the Party's activities (Regsuren 1973: 177). Between 1931 and 1940, these groups traveled from *sum* to *sum* in Arkhangai, often by cattle cart, touring for three to five months at a time. They were charged 'with the important task of propagandizing about the decisions of the Party and the government and spreading culture (*soyol tügeekh*) to the people'. While the Party was explicit about the political nature of its cultural activities, the performers themselves tended to interpret them in non-political ways. The director of the present Theatre in Tsetserleg, Ch. Gankhuyag, explains that many in the community viewed the provincial cultural centre as a place to gather, socialize, and make music:

> From the beginning, the performers here weren't trained; they weren't professional musicians and no one was earning a salary. They were just herders, but also talented people who got together to present their art to other herders. These people came out from among the people. [. . .] They could play the fiddle and sing long songs [*urtyn duu*], blessing [*yerööls*] and praise songs [*magtaals*] in their homeland and *khot ail* [a place with 3–5 families]. They learned to play these traditional things themselves and wanted to present them to other people.[4]

He insists that the local amateur performers there were not ordered by Party officials to perform in the centre. Rather, until at least the 1960s, it was the Party officials who used the amateur performances as opportunities to initiate political activities.

> There was no one who said we had to make these performances. People were just interested in the traditional arts that were common among them. The people who could play music and sing well joined together to give these concerts for the people [in our community]. It was the Party, the MPRP, that snatched away our idea. They used our concerts like an ideological weapon. But on the other hand, we didn't care if our concerts were interesting to the Party people or not. They just wanted to use our concerts to gather the people together for their meetings. So they did the propaganda work through these concerts, propagandizing about the MPRP's goals, the Revolution, and the Party's work. After the concerts, they criticized the people who did bad things and praised the people who did good things. And so in this way the new Mongolian culture started' (Ch. Gankhuyag).

An elderly singer, Sh. Chogsomjav, bitterly described the theatre of the 1950s and 1960s as 'a place of political agitation' (*ukhuulaga*). The degree to which people participated in political activities while simultaneously detaching themselves from their political meanings is telling. It suggests that many people gave passive approval to these Party initiatives in public, while interpreting their meanings in entirely different ways in private.

The Party Campaign to Speed up Cultural Development

By the late 1950s, Party officials were becoming increasingly anxious about what they saw as the slow pace at which Mongolians were taking up the new culture. Some were distressed by the tenacity of 'old ways of thinking' among the rural herders. The Secretary of the Party's Central Committee, D. Tömör-Ochir, complained at a meeting of provincial cultural officials in Ulaanbaatar in 1960 that the Party organizations needed to be ever more vigilant about their cultural activities. In order 'to eliminate the influence of the dark and undying parasites on naïve people,' he said,

> We must carry on a relentless program of propaganda in order to win the minds of these weak people and to divert their thinking into healthier and more realistic channels. This program requires tireless work in educating and reeducating the people in rural areas. It is important to analyze everything that hides under the general term of 'survivals from the past,' and to fight them thoroughly (Tömör-Ochir 1960).

In response to these long simmering concerns, the MPRP organized campaigns aimed to consolidate its nationwide efforts at cultural uplift. One of the most ambitious initiatives was the 'Cultural Leap Forward,' a massive campaign launched the MPRP Chairman Yu. Tsedenbal at the Party's 14th All-Party Congress in 1959.[5] The Congress platform defined the goals of the campaign as 'raising the cultural level of the working people, indoctrinating them in the spirit of communism, and fighting against the vestiges of old thinking' (Magban 1964: 46).

This campaign came to be known officially in Arkhangai aimag as the 'Years of Cultural Offensive' (*Soyolyn dovtolgoony jilüüd*). Its goals were incorporated into the local Party's 3– and 5–year plans, which allocated new funds for cultural activities (Regsuren 1973: 300). This was an initiative aimed at once and for all breaking the 'old habits' of the people and bringing about the 'blossoming' (*tsetseglelt*) of the new culture. By the early 1970s, the Party bureaucracy in Arkhangai was able to report many successes. The number of centres with film projectors increased to twenty-seven; the total number of books housed in centre libraries increased to more than 45,000, and the number of 'readers' rose, as well. Many centres also developed museums and photo studios, and organized branches of the Mongolian Artisan's Union and the Provincial Young Composer's Circle (Regsuren 1973: 299). In a Soviet-styled bureaucracy, such statistics were signs of achievement.

The cultural developments at the national and provincial levels in the early 1960s came during a time of enormous social, political, and economic change in Mongolian society. The Party's national campaign to move all of Mongolia's herders into newly constructed herding and agricultural collectives, or *negdels*, was officially completed in 1960. The massive industrial complexes in the new cities of Erdenet and Darkhan were also being constructed in this period, and many people were being sent from the countryside to live and work in them.

Much of the old society was being quickly and dramatically replaced with an urban-oriented and cosmopolitan society. The goals of the national 'Cultural Leap' campaign reflected this change, seeking 'to place a cultural organization in each *sum*, industrial complex, agricultural collective (*negdel*), and brigade (subunits of *negdels*) in the country' (Dashdondog 1965: 26).

These developments brought the country's rural economic and political activities more firmly under central Party control and oversight. The cultural campaigns had the same effect on rural cultural activities. By the 1960s, Tsetserleg's Club had been upgraded to a 'Cultural Palace' (*Soyolyn ordon*), and an increasing number of talented local amateur performers were sent to Ulaanbaatar for training in the newly expanded schools of music and art. The most talented performers were often 'taken' by the powerful state-run cultural institutions in Ulaanbaatar, such as the State Folksong & Dance Ensemble. But the Ministry of Culture sent most of the others back to their homelands. Those returning to Arkhangai were sent to work in the provincial cultural centres. About twenty performers worked in the Cultural Palace of Tsetserleg in the early 1960s. In succeeding years this number increased as more returned from schools in Ulaanbaatar. This trend accelerated during the 1970s and 1980s as the centre itself expanded, becoming a 'Music and Drama Theatre' (*Khögjim dramyn teatr*) in 1987. The repertoire also became more diverse during this period to include not only music and music-drama productions, but also regular productions of European classical theatre, operas, and ballets.

Such increases in the size, status, and repertoire of the Arkhangai Cultural Centre had the effect of bringing its cultural productions closer to those of the professional theatres in Ulaanbaatar. The relationships that developed between performers of the countryside and the City were often close. Most had received very similar training, often at the same schools in Ulaanbaatar or abroad, and they performed nearly the same repertoire. Rural and urban instrumentalists often even performed on the same kinds of modern, factory-made musical instruments.

These connections were also strengthened through face-to-face contacts. The Ministry of Culture frequently sent artists and ensembles from Ulaanbaatar to perform in the provincial cultural centres. It also sent teachers, coaches, composers, and other professionals to the provinces to help oversee and develop the centres' cultural activities. Furthermore, the Ministry mandated that each province present a program known as the 'Ten Days of Art and Culture' (*aimgiin soyol urlagiin arvan khonog*), a ten-day festival that featured selections of performances and exhibits from each province's artistic activities for audiences in Ulaanbaatar. Arkhangai held its largest 'Ten Days' celebration in Ulaanbaatar in 1965 (Mijiddorj 2004: 173). The close interaction between the countryside and the City in these final decades of single-party rule led to the rapid development of artistic activities in the rural cultural centres. The singer Chogsomjav characterizes this heady period as one in which his theatre 'became developed and rich.'[6]

The director Gankhuyag, however, is more ambivalent. While he is proud of the artistic achievements that occurred during this period in the theatre's history, he is also aware of their consequences. The standardization and professionalization of the centre's repertoire facilitated the development of a national artistic culture in Mongolia, but it simultaneously had the effect of quickening the dissolution of the distinctive cultural traditions indigenous to the province. By the late 1980s, talented amateur performers continued to work in the Theatre in Tsetserleg, but many of the important roles were going to professionally trained performers. Many of the older, self-trained amateur performers were being sidelined, along with their often unique forms of music, song, and dances. As Tömör-ochir's comments above demonstrate, the Party was wary of allowing traditional, or otherwise alternative, cultural styles to co-exist with officially sanctioned ones. Gankhuyag laments that 'It was probably around this time that we began to lose our folk music.'[7]

The Decline of the Arkhangai Cultural Centres, Post-1990

Mongolia's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1990 brought the state-directed development of rural culture to a near complete halt. As in other sectors of Mongolian society, the transition from single-party rule to a multi-party democracy brought both new possibilities and new problems. Director Gankhuyag reflected on the people's changing attitude towards national traditions in this time:

> This was a time when our society was beginning to change and develop an ultra-nationalist ideology [*undserkheg uzel*]. The old society was governed by a single party's ideology. In that time, people who worked in offices had to wear suits and dresses. But in the early 1990s, things really changed. Mongolian national pride was awakened throughout the nation and old Mongolian traditions were being awakened again. Everybody started to wear Mongolian traditional clothes and men wanted to wear their hair long and carry a real Mongolian knife. Everybody began to try to become a real Mongolian. Everything seemed so weird, interesting, and strange in that time. You know, it happened suddenly, and it seemed to me that we suddenly had become a different people.[8]

The singer Sh. Chogsomjav joined the conversation to describe how the Party's Council of Ideology had 'controlled everything in the Theatre and always told us what concerts we had to play.' After 1990, he continued, 'such things disappeared and we became free.' The new freedoms motivated artists like Ch. Gankhuyag to imagine new kinds of artistic possibilities.

> In this new period, we began to produce our works freely. We started to speak with our own voices and we also began to criticize the old society and the Party's ideology. In that short period [after 1990], the people began to become interested in the Theatre again, because we began this criticism. The Theatre's concert performances began to become interesting again. We were finally able to put on comic performances and perform shows that were critical of the Party, something that wasn't allowed before then. Soon after 1990, I was really brave, as a director, and organized a performance about Danzin Rabjai, who was a Mongolian enlightened person [of the 19th century]. I was worried that I would be stopped, but it wasn't.[9]

The worsening economic situation in the countryside in the mid-1990s, however, dampened much of this newly found sense of liberation and freedom. The theatre's lead horse-head fiddle player, I. Amartüvshin, a young man with thick, black shoulder-length hair, characterized the effect of the economic situation in the provincial centre.

> Since 1990 there has been a serious economic problem everywhere in the countryside, and there is always the expense of the tickets – of whether or not people have the money in their pockets to buy them. We have to deal with such questions in Tsetserleg. Our tickets only cost 500 *tögrögs* ($0.50 US). There is a big difference between the costs of concerts in the city and in the countryside. In Ulaanbaatar, concerts cost much more. But in the countryside, life is often difficult because people don't always receive their salaries in time. If they have 500 *tögrögs*, they often have to decide whether to see a concert or buy a loaf of bread. If the concert is free, there is nobody who won't want to see it.[10]

This situation has made it difficult for the theatre to pass on a higher percentage of its operating costs to the ticket-buying public. Their inability to find sufficient alternative sources of income has in turn affected the situation of the performers, whose salary has also not risen in line with inflation since the early 1990s. Most of the performers found it difficult to earn a living with a base salary of 25,000 *tögrögs* (about $25 USD) a month.

> This is a really small amount in the countryside, not just in the City [Ulaanbaatar]. With this amount we can buy just twenty-five kilograms of flour and then we'd have a bit left over. Unlike our friends from the City, we usually have no pocket money, and so can't buy things from the market. The only reason we can live with such a small salary is because our parents help us. We can

> get some milk or meat from them. It seems like we usually take a tax from our parents! But we don't have it as bad as others. There are so many families with many children where only one person works.[11]

According to Gankhuyag, some of the Theatre's best performers migrated to Ulaanbaatar to find better paying work and some of them have had to enter entirely new lines of work. It is not unusual to hear stories in the countryside of gifted performers who now work in Ulaanbaatar as a 'taxi driver' or 'trader'.

The economic migration of talented artists away from Arkhangai has left behind those performers less able or motivated to perform the professionalized folk music repertoire that was mandated by the Ministry of Culture in the preceding decades. Gankhuyag complains about the state of the professional folk arts in the countryside, which he says have been turned into 'classical' art forms that are difficult for his performers to maintain. He suggests not only that these forms are too difficult for local theatre performers but also that these art forms have become less relevant to the lives of those in the local community to whom they are performing.

> The [professional] folk arts of Arkhangai have been turned into classical arts, and are being left behind. People just can't learn them anymore. But neither are many in our community interested in them. Today the young people are more interested in the modern styles of art than in the folk arts. It's really only professional people who are still interested in them. These arts have become merely a face of the Mongolian people to show to foreigners.

At the same time, Gankhuyag sees that the traditional folk arts of Arkhangai, those deeply rooted in its nomadic heritage, have largely disappeared from everyday life:

> For example, our homeland belongs to the Central Khalkha, and the Central Khalkha have the musical traditions of the *urtiin duu* [long song], *bilege* [dance], and *bogino duu* [short song]. Today Mongolian art is developing very quickly, but these musical traditions are being left in a clear place that ordinary people cannot reach.[12]

Gankhuyag see the province's traditional musical traditions as receding at the same time as the urban folk musical traditions are flourishing. Those who continue to maintain the older musical traditions today are mostly senior (*akhmad*) performers. Younger musicians show little interest in learning or maintaining them. Amartuvshin relates the decline in traditional music making in the Tsetserleg community to the decline in the nomadic ways of life.

> There is no longer a nomadic lifestyle in our province; everything is now so centralized. And the people of these places no longer receive the traditional

> arts well. The new styles that come from the Western nations are now spreading and increasing throughout the community.[13]

He adds that the situation has particularly affected the transmission of this traditional knowledge from one generation to the next in local communities. 'There are fewer and fewer people who know these traditional musical arts. If somebody today wants to learn or study them, there are very few people still alive who can teach them.'

Redefining the Rural Cultural Centres

The current situation of cultural centres in Mongolia is generally poor. While the national government continues to commit itself to funding the operations of rural cultural centres, it has since the 1990s typically funded only a small portion of what these centres used to receive in the socialist era. Officials in these centres have had to reduce their spending, largely through reducing the number of performers and the number and size of their productions. The director of the Music & Drama Theatre in Khovd, N. Sengedorj, says, for example, that in 1990 his theatre had over 80 full-time performers; by 1998 this number had dropped to fewer than 30. He adds that the theatre used to have the resources to mount a large-scale production, such as a Shakespeare play or a major concert, at least once every two months. Now they struggle to mount one such performance a year.

While traveling through the countryside, it is not unusual to come across cultural centres with peeling paint and broken windows, cavernous holes in the floorboards, and collapsing theatre seats. It is not uncommon to find entire sections of theatres, particularly balconies, that are closed off due to lack of maintenance. Those centres that have managed to do well have done so usually by turning to alternative sources of income, such as in courting foreign tourists. Few have had much success in performing only for local community audiences.

But such financial difficulties are only one side of the problems facing these centres. Most now also find themselves suffering from what Bruce Grant calls the 'double irony' of the Soviet era cultural policies. As we have seen in the development of Arkhangai's cultural centres, Party policies during the Communist era mandated that distinctly local cultural traditions be replaced by urban, nationalized, and professionalized traditions, which become symbols of progress and development. But in looking beyond this professionalized and nationalized artistic culture, many in these rural centres find that little of their region's pre-Revolutionary artistic cultures have survived to the present. Grant speaks about communities in post-Soviet Siberia that have lost both their distinctive cultural traditions and the Soviet icons and symbols they traded them in for (1995: xii). These centres find they have little to show for their decades of investment in developing urban, cosmopolitan cultural traditions. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, Mongolians have sought to reassess who they are as a people and nation, and nationalists have urged them to remember and celebrate what was authentically Mongolian. But just how much can be remembered about a past so effectively suppressed?

Some rural centres have begun to develop cultural activities that bring together bits and pieces from the many different layers of local and regional history. The Arkhangai Theatre, for instance, has organized a 'variety' (*kholimog*) musical ensemble that joins older and younger performers from the community to perform music that mixes folk and modern sounds and styles. The musical instruments include folk instruments, such as the *morin khuur*, a two-stringed folk fiddle that has a long history in Arkhangai, and contemporary instruments, such as a Yamaha electronic keyboard, and drum set. The ensemble has proved to be very popular with audiences in Tsetserleg, and it has even encouraged many young Mongolians in the town to seek out lessons on the *morin khuur* at the Theatre.[14] Such successes suggest how rural cultural centres could once again find a place within their local communities.

Some centres no longer look to the central cultural institutions as a source of cultural authority. Ch. Gankhyag and his colleagues in Tsetserleg say, for instance, that they are planning to send some of their best performers to the far-western province of Uvs, where they will learn traditional *bilgee* dances and 'make detailed studies of the two-stringed fiddle's *tatlaga*',[15] a traditional two-string fiddle repertoire. They will then return to Arkhangai to teach others in both the theatre and the community. In so doing, they say they hope to reinvigorate the local cultural traditions in Arkhangai. It is ironic, however, that in their search for cultural authenticity, these cultural centres are consciously turning away from the cultural authority of the nation's centre, in Ulaanbaatar, and instead looking west, toward a region long considered to be less developed and more traditional.

In the western province of Khovd, the theatre director N. Sengedorj says that he is seeking to create what he calls a 'Mongol drama' (*Mongol dram*), theatre pieces that engage local performers in cultural activities that are traditional to the Mongols of the region. 'I think that the Mongolian theatre should reflect the Mongolian ways of seeing', he says,

> Mongolians on stage, for instance, should sit and talk the way Mongolians sit and talk. [. . .] Everything should be Mongolian – the smell, tastes, sounds, visuals; we should show the ways in which our people greet each other, sit and talk. Maybe in the beginning our audiences won't accept this bravely, but we should nonetheless continue to carry on the Mongolian traditions.[16]

Like the Arkhangai officials, Sengedorj is rethinking the purpose of the rural cultural centre in Mongolia, and in the process consciously reorienting it away from the urban centre of Ulaanbaatar. Both seek to rejuvenate local and regional senses of cultural identity, the Arkhangai theatre by piecing together a new hybrid identity and the Khovd theatre by creating a more symbolic identity. Though just two small examples, they both represent specific ways in which rural cultural institutions are continuing to rework their long and troubled relationship with the City.

Notes

1 In addition Tristra Newyear, personal communication.

2 In this regard, these centres appear to have spread in Arkhangai more quickly than in other provinces. Tsendorj reports that only in 1940 did all of the other provinces in the nation have so broad a distribution of centres (1983: 12).

3 '*Ardyn shine soyol*' (the people's new culture).

4 Interview with Ch. Gankhuyag and other performers, Music & Drama Theatre, Tsetserleg, Arkhangai province, 13 November 1998.

5 It would be interesting to compare this campaign with the 'Great Leap Forward' ('that massive utopian experiment') launched by Chairman Mao in the PRC a year earlier (Meisner 1985: 284–285).

6 Interview with Gankhuyag et. al, 1998.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Interview with Gankhuyag et. al, 1998.

11 Interview with Ganbold, Music & Drama Theatre, Tsetserleg, Arkhangai province, 13 November 13 1998.

12 Interview with Gankhuyag et. al, 1998.

13 Interview with Ganbold, 1998.

14 The Theatre's fiddle player, I. Amartuvshin says that he has enough young students to start his own *morin khuur* ensemble in Tsetserleg.

15 Interview with Gankhuyag et. al, 1998.

16 Interview with N. Sengedorj, Music & Drama Theatre, Khowd province, 27 June 2002.

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